



HOW THE USA CREATED A FLYING JAPANESE ZERO

SEPTEMBER 2025 • Vol.61/No.9

AIR CLASSICS

Where History Flies

MYSTERY OF THE SASEBO RAIDER

HOW DID THIS DOOLITTLE B-25B END UP IN JAPAN?

DUCK DISCOVERY

MAPS AIR MUSEUM MAKES AN
AMAZING BARN FIND

UNUSUAL ENCOUNTER

HOW AMERICAN LIGHTNINGS
FOUGHT SOVIET YAKS



PEARL HARBOR ZEROS

STORY OF THE NINE ENEMY FIGHTERS SHOT
DOWN DURING THE ATTACK

DICK GRACE'S RECORD FLIGHT

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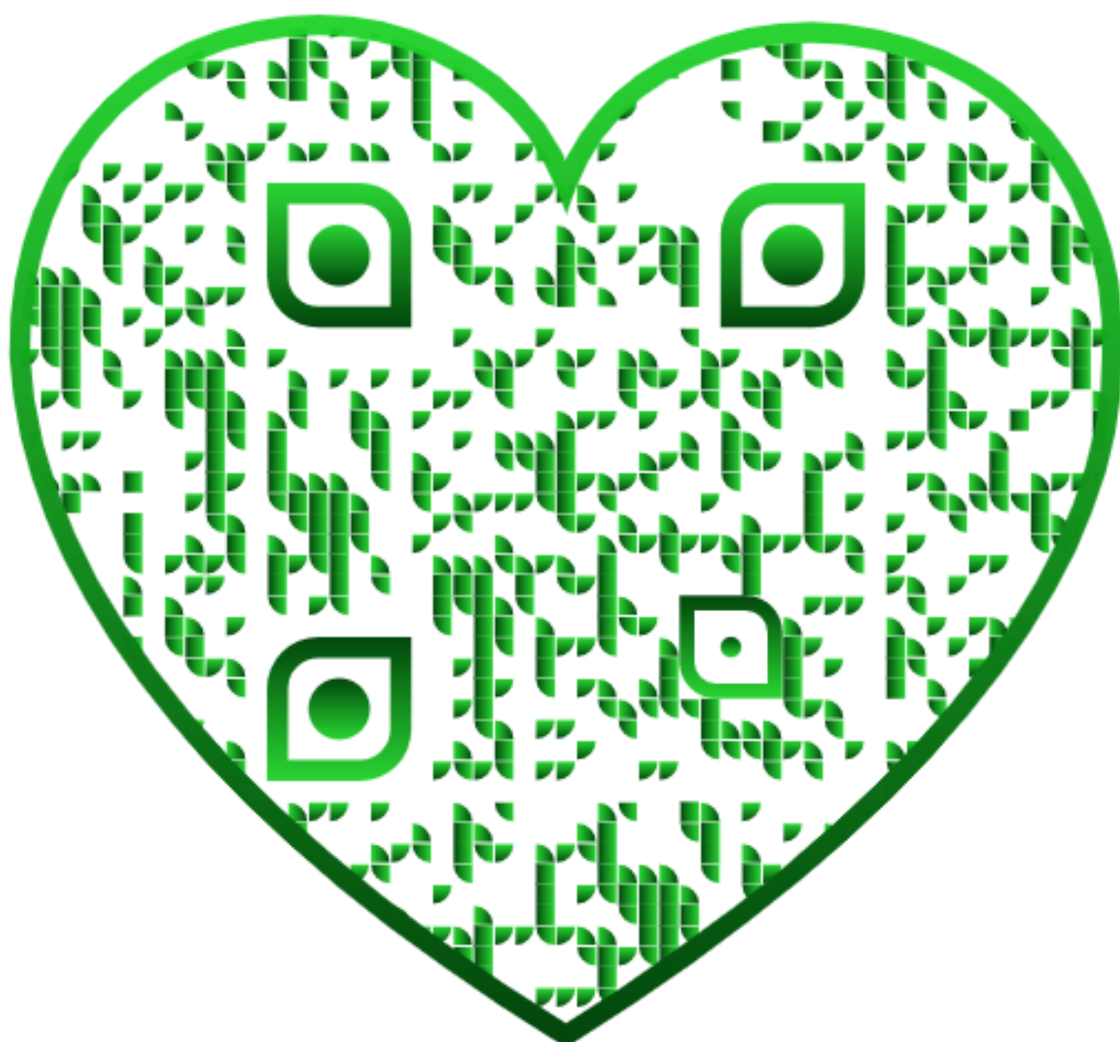
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Pacific Airshow, CA 3/5 October

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Planes of Fame Santa Maria, CA 12/17 October

Greg "Wired" Colyer with one of the AceMaker T-Birds.



AceMaker T-Birds with a Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II. (Mike Killian)

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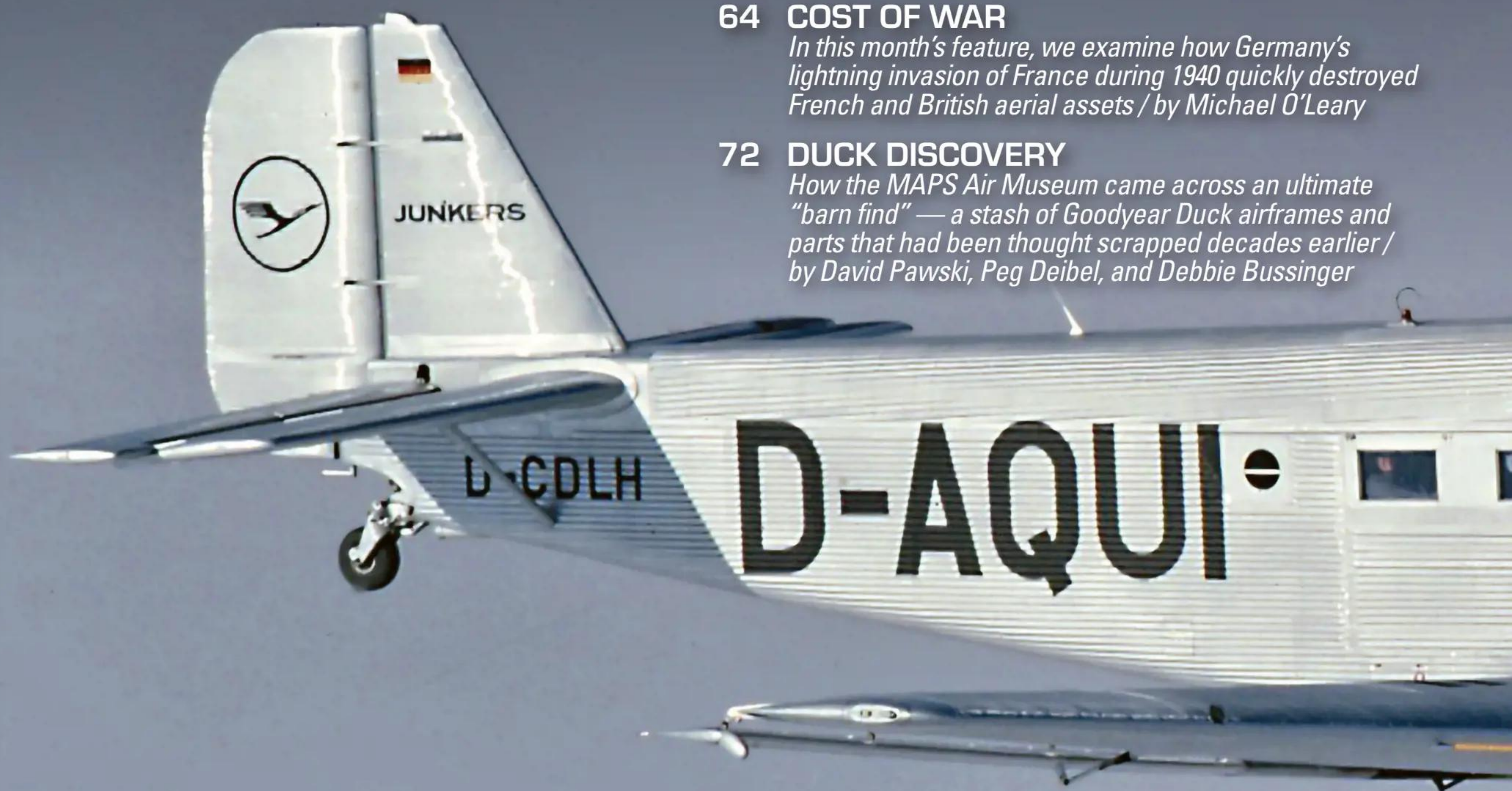
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COVER: Kodachrome view of an early Douglas Havoc having its Wright R-2600 engines run up at the Douglas factory at Clover Field in Santa Monica, California. (USAAF)

THESE PAGES: During 1991, Lufthansa brought its magnificent Junkers Ju 52/3m to the United States for a goodwill tour. The rare aircraft visited many airports along with stopping at fields that had Lufthansa facilities. We made several flights with this classic machine and it was under the command of Walter Eichhorn. Walter was a vintage aircraft enthusiast that flew just about anything with wings including the newly restored Messerschmitt Bf 109s. We learned that Walter passed away in Germany on 25 May. Born in 1936, Walter saw the horrors of WWII as a child. Becoming a Lufthansa captain, he always found plenty of time to fly a large variety of vintage aircraft including his own T-6 Texan. He became well-known for his T-6 aerobatic displays and in 2020, T-6 D-FHGK became part of the Red Bull collection with which Walter had been one of the first pilots. Photography by Michael O'Leary



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MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Secrecy. Is it playing a part in the reduced attendance at airshows and aviation museums across the country? Over the past few years, we have seen more and more restoration shops reluctant to have the planes they are working on photographed or even discussed. Why? When asked, they state it is not what the owner wants. In many ways, this is okay since it is the property of the owner and, for future business, restoration shops must obey their wishes. A couple of examples follow: A rare twin-engine Warbird has completed its restoration and is being readied for a first post-restoration flight. It is an aircraft of great interest to *Air Classics* readers. A call to the restoration shop's owner has us finding out that no photographs are allowed and that permission to look at the aircraft must be obtained from the owner's representative. Attempts to contact the representative are fruitless.

At another shop, an in-depth restoration is being done that will result in a magnificent example of a single-engine fighter. We are told that the owner does not want his name in print nor does he want any photographs taken. Whether he realizes or not, his name is a matter of public record with the FAA. Then comes an odd request — the owner would like to have everything in our company files that relates to his aircraft so that he can prove the plane is a combat veteran (it isn't). Unfortunately, this business has become a two-way street. Although we do have the requested material, we also have a responsibility to our readership to provide them with accurate news regarding the aircraft they love.

Is this secrecy trend becoming more common? Unfortunately, probably so. The acquisition and restoration costs of Warbird-type aircraft have risen tremendously. Some owners do not want it known where their money is being used. Parts that were once relatively common are no longer so. As soon as someone with a required part finds out that a shop is looking for that component, then the prices tend to leap up. I recall that when Paul Allen started building his collection, prices would rise on anything he needed once the owner found out that it was Paul Allen or his representatives doing the looking. Is this type of action okay? I guess it is if you believe in the workings of capitalism but in many ways, it is just pure, naked greed. In order to get parts at a fair market value, Allen had to have his restorers use fake names. I saw an example of this with a Mustang propeller. The prop was expensive, but it was what the market would tolerate. When the propeller's owner found out that it was being sourced for Paul Allen, he raised the price by a factor of four.

What we have seen with vintage aviation — and this also applies to such things as rare paintings, classic automobiles, and all sorts of genuine antique items — is that many collectors now have the ability to buy multiples of an object. So, perhaps having one B-17 Flying Fortress is good but having three examples might be a whole lot better. This acquisition of multiple aircraft of the same type usually means that the enthusiast will be deprived of seeing some of their favorite types. This is because the new generation of owners tend to be reclusive when it comes to displaying their aircraft. They are not museums so there is no tax advantage when it comes to allowing the general public to view the planes. However, that is also currently backfiring when it comes to one particular owner who put his collection under the shelter of an IRS 501(C)3 museum program that allows for major tax advantages — if the aircraft are available for viewing by the great unwashed (us). The IRS figured out the owner was enjoying the tax advantages of the program but was also depriving the public. An IRS investigation is now underway.

Once again, we have to remember that the owners of these planes are just that. If owners are not part of any sort of IRS program, then they are under no compunction to display their

aircraft. Since many are now acquiring aircraft by the dozen (at the moment, their value is rising more rapidly than just about anything else), this means that fewer aircraft will be displayed at airshows and other aviation events — especially if the owner has no interest in such displays. These reduced numbers mean airshow organizers have a smaller pool from which to draw. This has a trickle-down effect since the airshow attendee has a decreased desire to visit the event if they feel that the aircraft in which they are interested will not be displayed in sufficient quantity to justify the rising price of admission along with all the associated costs if one is traveling any distance to the event.

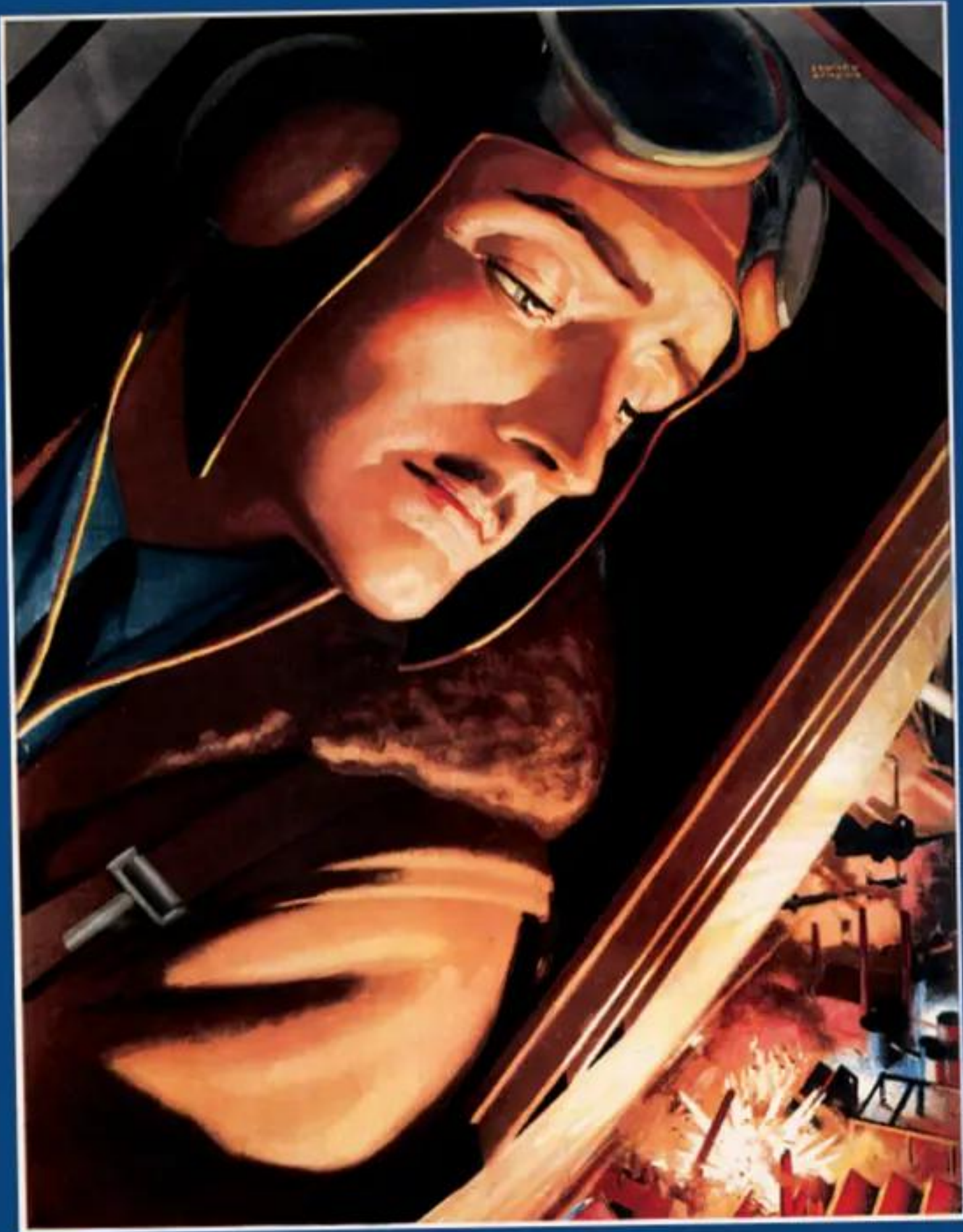
Huge shows such as those put on by the military will benefit from this since these events are free and always pretty exciting (if you like large numbers or really loud jets). Also, mega-shows like the EAA's AirVenture will benefit since just about anything and everything will be there and people can get up close and personal with pilots and aircraft. It is the smaller shows that are suffering with the increased aircraft costs, increased insurance, etc. If you have a local airshow, then support the event because if you do not it might be there when the next year rolls around.

Fortunately, we have other owners such as Rod Lewis who displays his aircraft at numerous events. For AirVenture 2025, Rod is planning on having his Constellation and something called the "Super Cats." There are some of us that have been around long enough to think that Super Cat refers to a PBY Catalina that has been re-engined with Wright R-2600s. In this instance, that is not the case. Rod and his crew will be bringing a fabulous collection of Grumman Cats (including his newly-restored Hellcat) to Oshkosh for some truly exciting flying. The Constellation has just completed having its deluxe interior installed in a process that took over a year to complete and we can state that it is like nothing else that has ever graced an interior of Lockheed's triple-tail classic.

All this comes down to an appeal of support — support your local airshows and air museums and be thankful that you can see these planes in their natural environment. In many other countries this is not possible. The European Union has instituted some draconian laws that restrict historic aircraft flying while also virtually eliminating the ability to pay for a ride in such an aircraft. We also have the problem of the replacement of 100LL. There have been numerous horror stories about testing with experimental fuels that have gone wrong — destroying engines in the process. Our Warbirds are high-horsepower aircraft that rely on quality fuel. Even with 100LL, these engines no longer develop maximum horsepower and it appears that some of the experimental fuels will greatly decrease this figure. "Progressive" states such as Washington are always searching for ways to increase taxes. Aviation is an easy target. A new Washington law tacks on an extra 10% to any aircraft costing over \$500,000. Unfortunately, that is no longer a high figure in the aviation market place.

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WARBIRD & CLASSIC REPORT

KEEP 'EM FLYING!
COMPILED BY DOUG FISHER



The Hellcat is carefully tugged past many of Yanks future restoration projects.



Unfolding the wings prior to engine start.

HELLCAT GETS ITS ENGINE RUN

During the early morning hours of 23 June, the restoration crew at Yanks Air Museum rolled out their Grumman F6F-3 Hellcat from the hangar and unfolded the wings after moving the plane to an open section of the ramp. For the crew, this was a really big day since the Pratt & Whitney R-2800 radial would be run for the first time on the airframe. "Cascade Engines did the overhaul of the R-2800," stated Casey Wright "and we have been really pleased with the quality of the engine. Everyone involved in the restoration of vintage aircraft says the last 10% of a project is often the most difficult and that is quite true. It has taken a lot of work and dedication by the crew to get the plane to flying condition." Once the Hellcat was in position and chocked, pilot Mark Todd got into the cockpit and once everything was ready, the R-2800 burst into full-throated life and settled in for its first run. "The engine ran really well," said Mark "and we will do some further engine runs before doing taxi tests and a high-speed run. Then, the Hellcat will be ready for its first flight." As readers of *Air Classics* know, this has been a long process but the F6F-3 is now ready. "This is the third Hellcat I have owned," said Charles Nichols "and I really think it is the best. Casey and crew have done a fine job and I am really looking forward to the first flight."



Mark Todd brings the R-2800 smoothly to life — the first time the engine and airframe have been run since WWII.



The very corroded Do. 17 being raised from the seabed



In 1944, Defiant N1671 was saved by the Air Historical Branch and went into storage until 1958 when it began making static appearances at various air displays. When the new RAF Museum opened at Hendon in 1972, the plane was put on display. In 2009, the aircraft was restored by the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society and finished in the markings of No. 307 (Polish) Squadron. N1671 had actually served as a day- and night-fighter with No. 307 during the war and would also go on to fly with Nos. 153 and 285 Squadrons.

DORNIER ON DISPLAY

Readers will recall the major effort to raise the mangled remains of a *Luftwaffe* Dornier Do 17 from the waters of Goodwin Sands some 70 years after it had been shot down during the Battle of Britain. During that epic aerial assault, the *Luftwaffe* deployed approximately 400 Do 17s to attack British targets. Today, no Do 17s survive except for this example. The aircraft raised in 2013 is badly damaged and extremely corroded but workers and volunteers at the RAF Museum have been doing their best to preserve the remains. A wing section from the downed bomber has now been put on display at the museum along with its engines and propellers. The wreckage has been placed alongside the sole surviving Boulton-Paul Defiant, the type of aircraft that shot the bomber from the sky. Owing to space constraints in the museum, the fuselage of the Do 17 will remain in storage for the time being but hopefully it will be displayed in the future.

The Defiant itself was a very odd concept. The aircraft did not have any forward firing guns and relied on downing enemy aircraft by coordinated attacks from the pilot and gunner, who sat in a turret with four .303-caliber machine guns. The Dornier was shot down in an engagement with Defiants from No. 264 Squadron on 26 August 1940 and recovery of the twin-engine bomber took place on 10 June 2013 and was broadcast live on British television.

At the time it was built, the British military reasoned that attacking bombers would not be

escorted by fighters because of the distance from Germany to the United Kingdom. As can be seen from this month's "Cost of War" installment, the British did not factor in that the Germans would roll over Poland, France, and the Low Countries in a very short amount of time and thus allow the *Luftwaffe* to establish bases directly across from England.

In its initial concept, the Defiant would be able to attack bomber formations almost at leisure with the gunner blasting away with his ineffective .303-caliber weapons. So strong was the belief in this concept that large orders were placed and two RAF squadrons were rapidly equipped with them while the Royal Navy received the similar Blackburn Roc. Testing against Hurricanes in February 1940 discovered that the Defiant was very vulnerable to Hurricanes. However, it was quickly found that the Defiant was completely out of its element when Messerschmitt Bf 109Es attacked them. On 12 May 1940, the type flew its first operational flight when six Defiants of No. 141 Squadron were escorted by six Spitfires of No. 66 Squadron. They flew across the Channel and encountered a single Ju 88 that was attacking shipping in the vicinity of the Hague, Netherlands. The next day, the patrol was repeated and the Defiants claimed four Junkers Ju 87s but they were then attacked by Bf 109Es and the escorting Spitfires were unable to defend them and five of the six were shot down. The Defiant operated over Dunkirk and once the *Luftwaffe* figured the aircraft was vulnerable

from frontal attacks, they switched their tactics and Defiant losses quickly mounted — especially among the gunners who had a very difficult time escaping from the turret. The type was withdrawn from daylight operations after heavy losses. The Defiant was then transferred to night-fighter duties and enjoyed some success with 13 squadrons being equipped with the type.



Detail view of the Defiant turret with a gunner from No. 264 Squadron wearing the GQ Parasuit. This was supplied exclusively to Defiant gunners and incorporated the parachute and life vest within its smock design.



Volunteer working on the Do 17 airframe. Even though the remains have been very carefully conserved, the aircraft is in extremely bad condition. However, it is also the only surviving example of the Battle of Britain bomber.



Dornier Do 17Z coded FI+KK from 2./KG 76 over England during the Battle of Britain.



White 1 with the BMW radial running for the first time since WWII. (Kaspar Zdenek Jr.)

FOCKE-WULF COMES ALIVE

Exciting news from GossHawk Unlimited at Casa Grande, Arizona. On 20 June, Kris Sherry of Mike Nixon's Vintage Radials got into the cockpit of the American Heritage Museum's Focke-Wulf Fw 190 *White 1* and brought the BMW radial to life. "This was really exciting for us," said Lindsey Goss. "We have been working on the Fw 190 for years to make it the finest surviving example and to see the engine run was thrilling." Although the rare engine had been run numerous times on the test stand, this was the first time that it was operated while attached to the airframe. "This was a great moment for all of us," said Rob Collings. "It is another step closer to getting *White 1* back in the air for the first time since WWII." Also at GossHawk, work is progressing on the restoration of two other Fw 190s for a northern California collector so GossHawk has really become the focal point for anything to do with the famed German fighter



"We have a couple small things to fix," said Dave Goss "but after more engine runs, the Fw 190 will be ready for its first post-restoration flight." (GHU)



Work underway on the Yanks Air Museum's P-51A is rapidly proceeding at Cal Pacific. Kermit Weeks' P-51A is to the rear. (Nicholas A. Veronico)

P-51A RESTORATIONS MOVE FORWARD

"Lori and her crew at Cal Pacific are doing a tremendous job on our P-51A Mustang," states Yanks Air Museum's Charles Nichols. "The work is absolutely first-rate and we are looking at getting the fuselage back in our shop to attach the wing and engine prior to painting the plane in authentic markings. Also, I would like to invite visitors to come to our restoration shop and view the work we have done on the wing and the attention to detail we are taking in preserving original markings." The P-51A had been on display in the museum for years but a decision was reached to return the aircraft to flying status. As can be seen, work is being done alongside Kermit Weeks' P-51A so we will have two rare variants of the famous fighter airworthy in the not distant future.



PV-2D Harpoon N6657D on the Aero Trader ramp at Chino shortly after its arrival during June.

HARPOON FOR KERMIT

"Although I already own a Lockheed PV-2 Harpoon [BuNo 37202 N7438C], I decided to acquire this example since it has really been restored to a high quality with all the original equipment installed in the airframe," said Kermit Weeks regarding his purchase of the PV-2. Kermit's new Harpoon was a former fire-bomber (Tanker 101) that was saved by Taigh Ramey and flown to his restoration facility at Stockton, California, where PV-2D BuNo 84062 N6657D was brought back to its former glory with the installation of virtually all its original military equipment.



Air Classics contributor Mark Bingham goes aloft in an N3N-3. Mark's P-51D used to be based at Flabob when it was owned by Frank Tallman.

FLABOB'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Historic Flabob Airport in Jurupa Valley, California, celebrated its 100th anniversary of operations this past May. Weather was a bit of a problem but a number of historic aircraft flew into the field and almost all the hangars were open so spectators could view what was going on. As the weather permitted, many of the vintage aircraft went aloft giving rides. Flabob is becoming an important destination for all aviation enthusiasts and we will have a more detailed report in an upcoming issue.



Charlie Laird gets airborne in his Stinson AT-19.

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s/n 44-74813 N151BW



1945 NORTH AMERICAN P-51D
s/n 45-11571 N51T



1945 GRUMMAN FM-2 WILDCAT
Bu. Num 86680 Reg: N11FE



1952 DOUGLAS AD-4NA
s/n 126965 N965AD



1929 TRAVEL AIR 6000A
s/n 865 NC9084



1944 DOUGLAS A-26B
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Gloster Gladiator 423 is in the final stages of restoration.

GLADIATOR RESTORATION

The ferocious fighting that took place in Norway during the early days of the Second World War is forgotten by most Americans. Allied forces joined in fighting the Germans in a bitter and difficult war that eventually saw the defeat and withdrawal of the Allies to leave Norway occupied by the Germans. One of the aircraft that fought valiantly during those difficult months was the biplane Gloster Gladiator. For years, a group of enthusiasts has been attempting to restore Gladiator 423 that flew with the Norwegian Air Force. Great news has come forward in that the Norwegian government realizes the importance of the aircraft and has supplied funding to finish what is now considered a national cultural monument. Part of the work is being done in England but the Gladiator will return to Norway this fall for finishing, including adding the fabric and painting. The engine has been tested and is running and it will be installed on the completed aircraft.



Morane-Saulnier MS.733 F-AZXU before and after its accident.

FRENCH MORANE LOST

On 6 June, Morane-Saulnier MS.733 Alcyon F-AZXU crashed near Rochefort-Saint-Agnant Airport in France, killing the pilot and destroying the aircraft. The aircraft was being flown by an ex-French Air Force pilot and was taking part in a flying display. The plane was coming in to land but the pilot initiated a go-around. The aircraft climbed to about 1000 feet and then appeared to stall, diving nose-down to where it crashed near the airport runway. The Alcyon was designed and built as a two/three seat basic trainer for the French military. The prototype flew on 11 August 1949 and was powered by a Mathis 8G.20 inverted V-8 engine but production aircraft were fitted with a Potez 6D 02 engine of 240-hp. The aircraft was used by the French air force and navy as well as several foreign air forces. It was capable of aerobatics and could be armed.



Noralpha G-ATHN being removed from storage prior to restoration.

NORD FOR RESTORATION

Nord 1101 Noralpha G-ATHN has been acquired by Blackstone Aviation at Eshott, England, for complete restoration. The 1948 aircraft was sold surplus as F-BFUZ in France before going on the British civil registration in 1967. The plane has been in storage in Germany for decades and the Merserschmitt-derived design will make for an interesting restoration.

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The ex-Paul Allen *Stuka* shrink wrapped and ready for its move. (FHCAM)



Original data plate and markings on the *Stuka*. (AHM)

STUKA PROGRESS

Who would have thought that we would now have two Junkers Ju 87 *Stukas* under restoration to fly once again? After being dormant for some time, the late Paul Allen's Ju 87 has been covered in shrink wrap and sent to a restoration facility for completion. We tried to contact the museum to find out the location but have not had a reply. Readers will recall that the airframe was restored in the Czech Republic so it is possible that the dive-bomber will be sent back to that location. A great deal of really beautiful work has already been carried out on this aircraft and when completed it will be a



The restored right wing is in the foreground and an unrestored left wing is crated behind the fuselage. (FHCAM)



The American Heritage Museum's *Stuka* retains much of its original paint and markings. This view shows the WNr on the vertical tail along with the swastika. (AHM)

stunning example.

Work is moving ahead at a rapid pace on the American Heritage Museum's Ju 87 **reports Joe Scheil** in a follow-up to last month's feature on the aircraft. Work is being carried out in the Czech Republic and the hunt for more original components continues. Rob Collings stated, "We have started this project on a fast track towards completion. Although there is much work to be done, we plan to move forward as rapidly as possible. Given the rich historical significance of this airframe, we are doing everything possible to return it to flight condition in the least amount of time."



Disassembly starts on Westland Lysander OO-SOT. (B. Denet)

LYSANDER ON THE MOVE

One of the main aircraft of the Belgium Warbird population has been sold to The Fighter Collection in Britain, **reports Benoit Denet**. Westland Lysander Mk. III V9546 entered Royal Canadian Air Force service on 22 October 1942 and was disposed of in a surplus sale after the war. After a quarter century of outside exposure, the airframe was saved from a farm by Canadian collector Wes Agnew. In 1971, it went into storage with the *Musee Royal de l'Armee* in Brussels, Belgium, but in 1982 it was sold



The fuselage of the rare Warbird is prepared for shipment to Britain (B. Denet)

to the Sabena Old Timers Foundation for restoration. Using parts from Lysanders RCAF 2341, 2360, and 2442, it was restored and made its first flight on 27 August 1988 registered as OO-SOT. Problems arose when it made a forced landing on 4 September of that year. It was repaired to only suffer major damage in a ground loop on 17 July 2001. Another airframe was obtained in Canada and the plane was re-restored, rolling out on 13 September 2008.



N2S-3 Kaydet N6848 after its takeoff accident.

STEARMAN DOWN

Boeing Stearman N2S-3 Kaydet N6848 (c/n 75-6848, BuNo 07244) was badly damaged after crashing on takeoff from Skymeadows Airpark in Spokane Valley, Washington, on 15 June. The engine was ripped from the fuselage and the plane overturned but both occupants escaped with minor injuries.



The Black Widow with its distinctive nose art. (K. Grantham)

BLACK WIDOW NOSE ART

At the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum, Northrop P-61B Black Widow USAAF 42-39445/N550NF has received its nose art, **reports Kevin Grantham**. This long-term restoration has been making significant progress and the nose art was applied by artist Jennifer “Hot Rod Jen” Thompson. Named *Moonbeam Dream*, the art is relatively complex and took quite a bit of time to apply to the gloss black night-fighter. Specializing in art work for hot rods and custom cars, several members of Jen’s family have helped with the Black Widow’s restoration so she was a natural choice to do the nose art. Also, during this year’s annual three-day MAAM show, Jen recreated the nose art on an external panel that was then auctioned off. Currently, work is progressing on rebuilding the P-61’s outer wing panels.



Work is progressing on restoring the P-61B’s outer wing panels. (K. Grantham)



Jennifer Thompson working on the nose art panel that was auctioned off on 8 June, the last day of MAAM’s very popular annual show. (K. Grantham)



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MYSTERY OF THE SASEBO RAIDER

HOW DID THE WRECKAGE OF A DOOLITTLE RAIDER B-25B WIND UP AT A JAPANESE AIR BASE?
BY STEVE WHITBY



First Day Cover commemorating the B-29 raid on Sasebo.

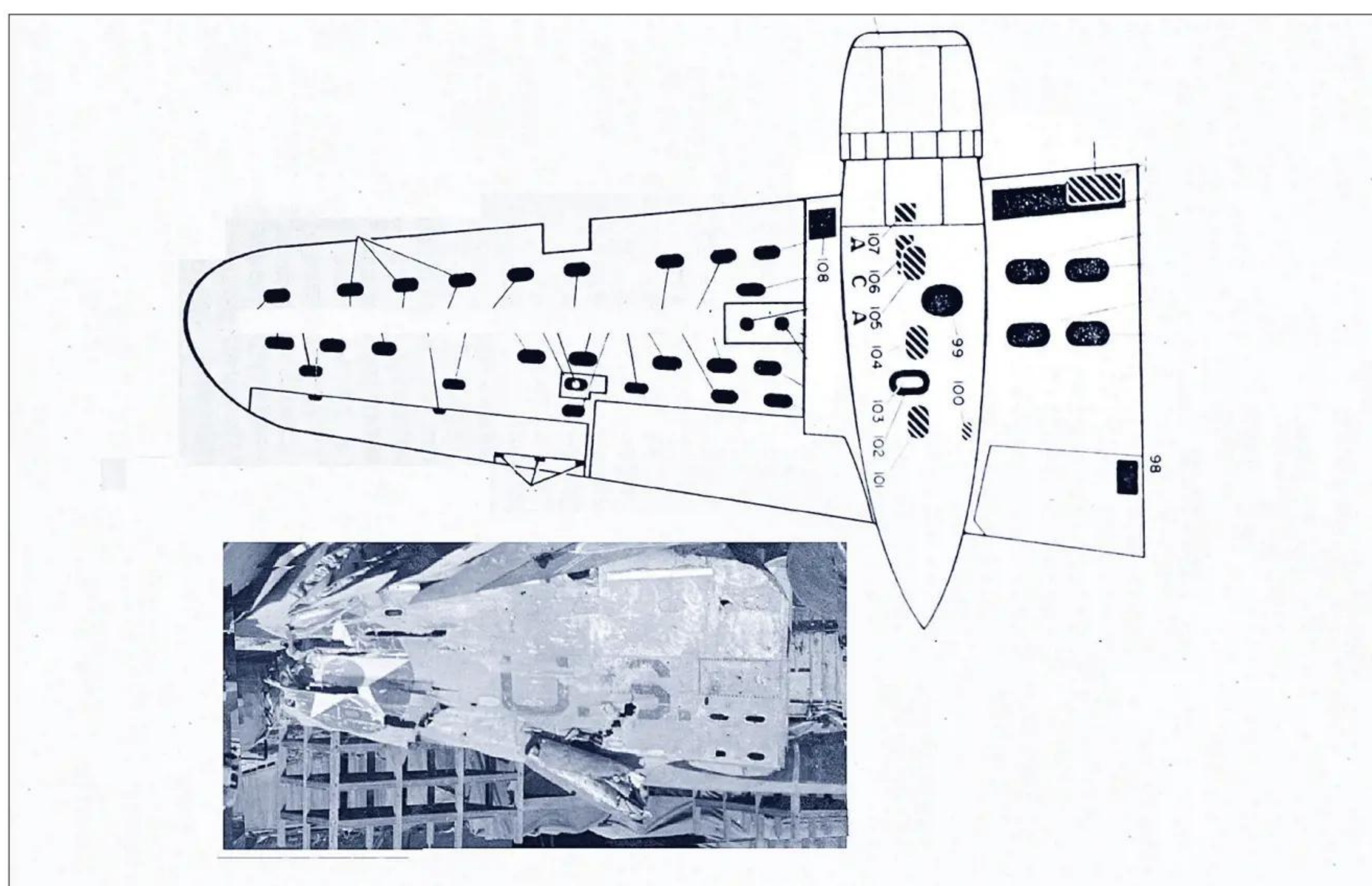
Overall view of some of the Japanese aircraft at Sasebo with the B-25B wing at left center.

With the end of the war in the Pacific, American forces rapidly occupied Japanese military bases. General Douglas MacArthur thought that radical elements would not accept the terms of the unconditional surrender and attempt to attack American and Allied assets. Accordingly, MacArthur ordered that all Japanese military aircraft (and there were hundreds of them gathered for planned massive suicide attacks against American invasion fleet) have their propellers removed. If this was not done, then the bases at which they were located would come under military reprisal.

Sasebo was one of four principal naval shipyards operated by the Imperial Japanese Navy and dated back to 1886, when it was created as the third of the four principal naval districts responsible for the defense of the Home Islands. The facility rapidly grew and by 1903 it was named as the Sasebo Naval Arsenal. By 1913, a massive 250-ton crane had been erected to aid in the construction of large warships. As time progressed, Sasebo was the site for the conversion of the *Akagi* and *Kaga* from battleships to the aircraft carriers that would provide the IJN with a deadly striking force.

During the height of WWII, the IJN had some 50,000 people working at Sasebo on a variety of tasks including the constructing and refitting of destroyers, light cruisers, submarines and other combat vessels. Also, the 21st Naval Air Arsenal was established at Sasebo and would produce 966 aircraft.

The city of Sasebo had a population of over 300,000 prior to 29 June 1945. On that day, the city was visited by USAAF B-29s for the first time and the bombing destroyed a large portion of the business and shopping districts, leaving over 1000 dead and 60,000 homeless. With the surrender, the occupation of Sasebo and the neutralization of its military facilities became a priority. On 22 September 1945, elements of the 5th Marine Division arrived in the harbor and began going ashore to occupy areas tentatively selected at Saipan from aerial photographs and verified by an advance party. Ships began rapidly unloading cargo and supplies. The 1st and 2nd Battalions, 27th and 13th Marines, landed on the docks the next day and headed to the areas they were



Magnified portion of the photograph showing the B-25B wing panel along with an illustration from the manual that shows the access panels.



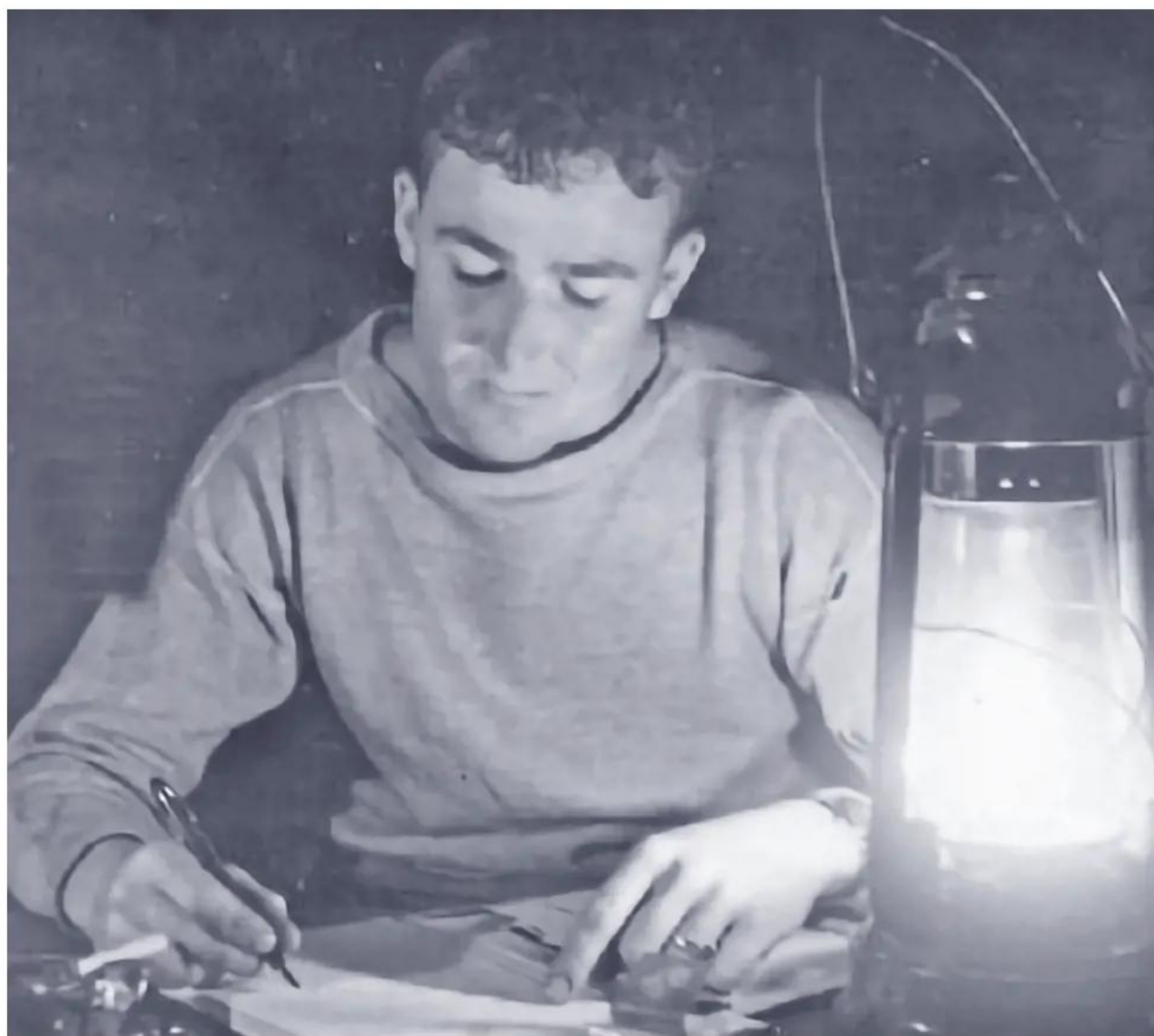
assigned to occupy including the aircraft factory and air station.

Most of the residents of the city had taken off to hide in the countryside, leaving the area nearly abandoned. Marines described the city as almost unbearable due to the stench rising from refuse piled high through the streets. Initially, a few Japanese children showed up and the Marines gave them candy and food. Returning to their families, the children spoke of their kind treatment by the Marines and many of the city's citizens began returning.

Omura, about 22 miles from Sasebo, was selected to be the base for Marine air operations in southern Japan although one Marine general described Omura's 5000 by 4000-foot landing area to be of the "cow-pasture variety." The advance echelon found a considerable number of

Japanese aircraft ranging from Willow primary trainers through combat aircraft such as Jacks, Georges, and Zeros. On 23 September, 21 Vought Corsairs from VMF-113 landed at Omura and were soon joined by Corsairs from VMF-314, VMF-422, and VMF(N)-543. The Americans quickly began repairing facilities at the airfield as well as building new ones.

Also, Marines were to come ashore in force but it was reported that the selected landing beaches were heavily mined but that the harbor at Nagasaki was clear so the decision was made to land at that location. On 23 September, the 2nd and 6th Marines went ashore in full combat gear with fixed bayonets and full magazines on the east and west sides of the harbor. One Marine would later comment, "Nagasaki can be described



PFC Richard Stotz writing a letter home by candlelight.

very easily: It is a filthy, stinking, wrecked hole, and the sooner we get out the better we'll all like it."

Nagasaki was, of course, the site of the second atomic bomb drop and the Marines were ordered to establish a cordon around the area destroyed by the explosion. Lieutenant Colonel George Cooper would later record, "Ground zero appeared to have been a rather large sports stadium, and all of us were categorically ordered to stay out of any place within pistol shot of this area. The result of this order was that everybody

and his brother headed directly for ground zero as soon as they could, and in no time at all had picked the area clean of all moveable objects."

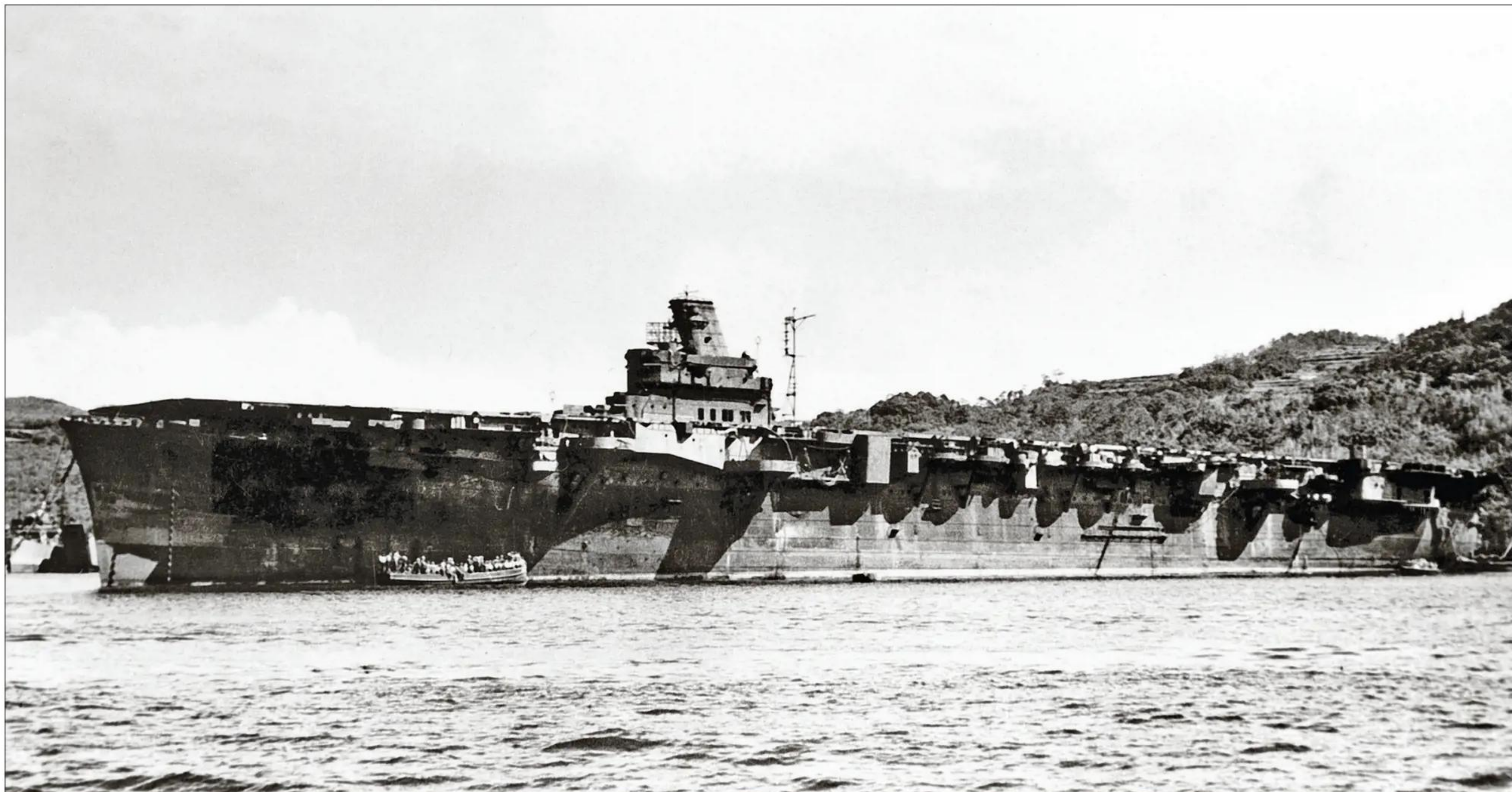
The Marines knew that the Japanese were a ferocious enemy that often refused to surrender and were annihilated. Therefore, they were astounded to find the Japanese extremely docile. Brigadier General Joseph Stewart recorded, "We couldn't believe the Japanese could previously fight so ferociously and then be so completely subservient, without a murmur. Not once did I see



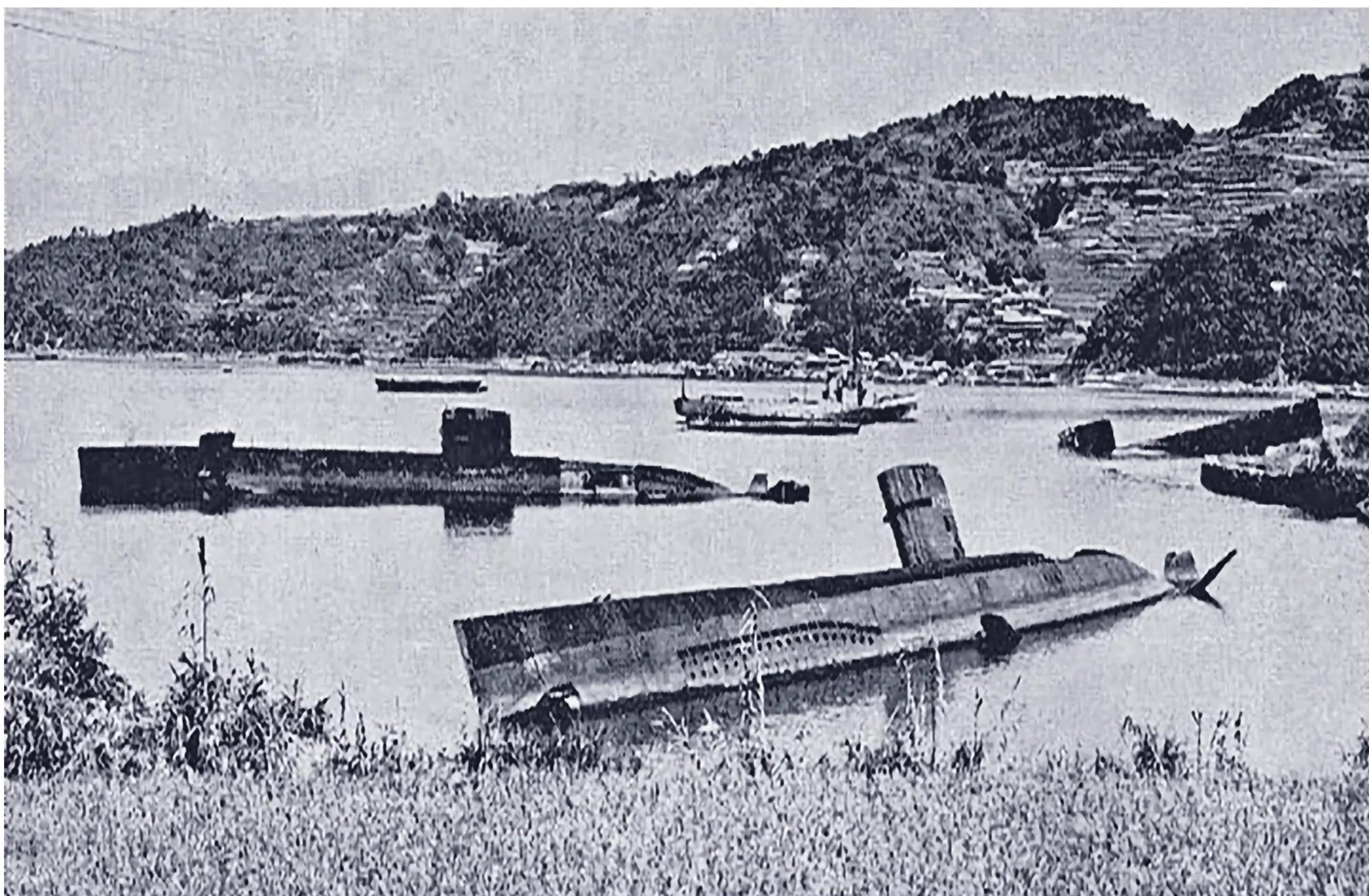
Stotz took this image of Marines pinned down by enemy fire as they sit near the grave of a fallen comrade.

any Japanese who acted or looked with disrespect toward occupation forces. We were overwhelmingly surprised by the cooperative reception we had from the Japanese."

With the Marine combat and construction troops came the official photographers whose mission it was to record just about everything they could see and this included the ships and aircraft that littered the area. It was a nearly overwhelming task. The harbor featured everything from an aircraft carrier to numerous submarines and



Japanese carrier *Juyno* in Sasebo Harbor. The carrier had been hit by torpedoes from Navy subs *USS Sea Devil*, *Plaice*, and *Redfish* on 9 December 1944. She managed to limp to Sasebo but at this point in the war the enemy no longer had the materials nor capability to repair the ship. An American technical team declared the carrier a total loss on 8 October and it was scrapped in mid-1946.



Abandoned Japanese submarines at Sasebo.

other naval vessels. Hundreds of aircraft were at Sasebo and the surrounding airstrips and they varied in condition from derelict to ready to fly.

Unfortunately, there was little for American intelligence officers to glean from the hundreds of aircraft. Japanese aeronautical technology was just nowhere near advanced as that of Axis partner Germany. A few airframes were put aside along with some spare engines but the majority of aircraft on the base were ordered destroyed — the sooner the better.

Marine Corps photographers wandered amongst the rows of warplanes while also investigating what was inside the damaged hangars. One of the photographers was Richard “Dick” Stotz and he walked through the devastation with his trusty Speed Graphic camera, taking images on 4X5 black and white negatives. Many of these negatives survive in the National Archives. We should take some time to discuss Dick Stotz and the photographers that recorded this history.

Richard H. Stotz was born in Fremont, Ohio, on 18 March 1922. Always interested in photography, after

graduating from high school he owned and operated Abdoo Photography with his brother Donald. On 14 December 1942, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and reported to boot camp at Camp Pendleton.

After completing that arduous course, he was assigned to the base photographic section as a photographer and completed many aerial and reconnaissance training flights. In 1944, Dick was reassigned to the 5th Marine Division, 28th Marine Regiment Intelligence Platoon, as a motion and still photographer. Each division had

twelve to 30 still photographers and cinematographers. Stotz and the other combat photographers were sent to 20th Century Fox Studios in Hollywood for additional training.

In September 1944, the 28th left Camp Pendleton and sailed to Hawaii to join the 26th and 27th Regiments for intense training and to practice beach landings. During January 1945, they departed aboard the USS *Dickens* and while at sea learned they would be part of Operation *Workman Island* — the invasion of Iwo Jima. On 19 February, they arrived off that deadly piece of real



This view shows the B-25B rear fuselage just to the right of center.



Magnified portion of the photo shows the right horizontal and rudder to better advantage. Also note the Marine Corps photographer immediately behind the wreckage.



Photo of right side of the B-25B fuselage shows the camera port and the opening for the retractable rear tail skid.

estate and Dick and his fellow Marines were part of the second wave to advance ashore. They were followed by three additional waves of troops.

Carrying just light armament and all their camera gear, the position of combat photographer was very dangerous. The film taken by Dick and the others was not developed in the field. It was sent out by plane or ship to be developed, printed, and studied elsewhere. During the horrible fighting, Dick and his fellow photographers took some of the most famous images of Marines at war. Dick would go on to serve at Okinawa and the Occupation of Japan.

Stotz returned to civilian life in 1946 and worked as a studio photographer and later as a salesman. It appears he never talked about the war nor his

experiences. Somewhere along the line, he created four thick binders of his WWII photographs, with the majority being from Iwo Jima where two of his fellow photographers were killed. Shortly before his death in 2008, he gave the albums to a nephew who had no idea that Stotz had participated in the war or took some famous photographs. “He kept it all to himself,” said nephew Bruce Hirt of the 1200 photos in the albums. Included in the albums were several of the photographs printed in this article.

We will never know what captured Stotz’s attention but our lead photograph illustrates the Japanese aircraft piled together and the center of the image is dominated by numerous *hinomaru* insignias but just to the left is the bottom of a wing with the early USAAF insignia

comprising an Insignia Blue circle with Insignia White star and an Insignia Red center. Then, to the left of the American insignia we have “U.S.” applied in Insignia Blue over the Neutral Gray background. This odd juxtaposition of Japanese and American insignias must have caught the eye of the photographer — something so unusual that he wanted to record it with his Speed Graphic.

Then, the second image shows the bent and battered rear section of an aircraft with distinctive twin tails — a North American B-25 Mitchell. How on earth did this wreckage of a Mitchell come to be included in the jumble of Japanese warplanes?

I knew at once that the wreckage was from a Mitchell but what variant of B-25? I had my suspicions but I dug out reference books, manuals, and photographs. The access panels on the undersurface of the wing along with details of the rear fuselage helped confirm what I was thinking. This was an early variant of the Mitchell — a B-25B. On the bottom of the rear fuselage, you can make out the camera port and the opening for the retractable rear tail skid.

The 16 B-25B Mitchells that took part in the famed Doolittle Raid on Japan were the only B models that went to war against the Japanese in the Pacific. In their search for the Raiders, the Japanese would have access to the wreckage of 14 B-25Bs including the one flown by Jimmy Doolittle and Richard Cole.

The surprise Doolittle Raid was a major blow to Japan’s attitude of invincibility. Bringing B-25B wreckage back to Japan would serve as good propaganda — showing that the enemy invaders had all been destroyed. The wrecks could even have been used for fund-raising — much in the way of American War Bond drives that utilized enemy aircraft. Perhaps this B-25B wreckage was displayed for a time in nearby Nagasaki. Ted Lawson mentions that he heard rumors that parts of his *Ruptured Duck* were brought back to Japan. With the passage of time and the lack of any official surviving records, we will probably never learn the actual facts behind this particular B-25B wreckage except that it was certainly one of the aircraft that set out for America’s first attack on Japan’s Home Islands. **AC**

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LOG ENTRIES BY MARK BINGHAM

FLIGHT OF THE CRUZAIR

HOW MOVIE STUNT PILOT DICK GRACE ATTEMPTED
TO BE THE FIRST TO FLY FROM HAWAII TO THE MAINLAND
IN ONE OF AVIATION'S STRANGEST RECORD ATTEMPTS

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF KALANI OGATA



Hollywood studio portrait of Dick Grace.



Grace's first acting role was in *The Flying Fool*.



Dick Grace atop the wing of a Curtiss Jenny before he made a jump to a similar aircraft in one of the most hazardous of all his stunts.

Many tried and many were found wanting. History favorably remembers the victors but frigidly forgets the vanquished. Dick Grace desperately wanted to be the first civilian to cross the Pacific between the Hawaiian Islands and the American mainland. Grace had all the markings of potential success, but he barely made it off the island of Kauai before crash-landing at the same location of takeoff in his Waterhouse Cruzair on 4 July 1927. The actual events of the Grace flight are as confusing as the various accounts of the doomed flight rendered by Grace himself.

Grace was a 29-year-old stunt and movie pilot that had earned a small degree of notoriety for numerous deliberate crashes. He also acted (badly) in a few movies while writing a screenplay for another. Grace contemplated a Pacific crossing as early as 1922, but it was the fame of the successful Atlantic crossing by Charles A. Lindbergh on 21 May 1927 that committed Grace to his ill-fated attempt to cross the Pacific.

First, Grace wrote several books about his life and times and some of the facts need to be taken with more than a few grains of salt. Born in Minnesota during 1898 (the month and day of his birth

vary), young Grace became fascinated with aviation. When America entered the war, he claimed he lied about his age (which, given his year of birth, he would not have needed to do) and joined the US Navy. He enrolled as a Seaman 2nd Class at Minneapolis on 14 December 1917 and underwent aviation ground school at MIT before heading to Pensacola for flight training where he became Naval Aviator No. 749 upon graduation. Grace was assigned to NAS Bolsena in Italy where it appears he was an instructor, training pilots in flying Italian aircraft types such as SVA, Macchi, and Caproni. US Navy pilots flying from Bolsena also conducted raids on Austro-Hungarian targets including the naval fortress at Pola. Our Aviation Films Editor Bruce Orriss states that the movie *The Lost Squadron* (adapted from a magazine article written by Grace) was loosely based on Grace's WWI experiences. Returning to the USA in 1919, he studied at the University of Minnesota, joined a group of barnstormers, and began performing a variety of stunts in the air and on the ground.

Attracted by Hollywood, he moved to California and started doing stunts for the movies including diving off buildings, driving cars over cliffs, and setting himself

on fire. When the movies started filming epics on the Great War, aircraft crashes were required and Grace began planning how to do these while not getting killed in the process. He began to amass a number of screen credits as he wrecked a variety of aircraft. The 10 October 1926 issue of the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Grace, who they called “one of the best known fliers in Hollywood,” would crash an airplane for William Wellman’s new film *Wings*. In the process of doing this, he managed to break his neck.

Grace enjoyed, besides the injuries, the Hollywood life style and claimed he shared a house with Rudolph Valentino and actor Richard Arlen, a highly doubtful boast. He started writing articles for a number of popular magazines and gained some fame in that field while continuing to crash planes for the silver screen. A 24 November 1928 *Los Angeles Times* review for the new film *Lilac Time* enthused, “One of the most spectacular air pictures ever filmed... thanks to the breath-taking thrills and crashes by ace Dick Grace.” And so it went. Grace would state, “Crashing and writing are my lines and I like both too much to cut either. And it isn’t so dangerous after all — that is, if you know what to do and the time to do it.” That brings us back to the curious story of the Cruzair and the flight to America.

Immediately following the Lindbergh flight, Grace obtained the original Waterhouse Cruzair (s/n 1) in California equipped with a 9-cylinder, Wright J4 Whirlwind motor of 200-hp, he modified the airplane for long-distance flight, loaded it on the Matson Lines freighter SS *Manukai*, and headed for Honolulu.

First, a few notes on the Cruzair (sometimes spelled Cruizair in contemporary accounts). The 1926 aircraft was the creation of designers W.J. “Bill” Waterhouse and Lloyd Royer who formed Waterhouse & Royer Aircraft at Glendale, California, during 1925. The craft was a break from the traditional biplanes of the time period. It was a two-seat monoplane (almost a parasol) of conventional construction and A.L. “Pat” Patterson became involved in the project and attempted to market the Cruzair. It seemed to be a rather promising craft with a span of 36 feet, length of 23 feet 10 inches, and a listed range at the time of manufacture of 550 miles. The whole business was run on



Actress Colleen Moore with Grace after a filmed crash for *Lilac Time*.

a shoestring and plans to put the aircraft into series production failed.

In order to recoup some of their investment, the plans and design data for the Cruzair were sold to T. Claude Ryan as a project for the Mahoney-Ryan Flight School, also located in San Diego. Ryan would build the Cruzair as the M-1 and the specifications between the two aircraft are nearly identical except the M-1 was listed with a more realistic range of 400 miles. The M-1 was



Grace had a starring role in *Wide Open*.

advertised as America’s first production monoplane but there is a bit of controversy with this story. The Cruzair was built in 1924/1925 at Glendale and the first M-1 was built by William Hawley Bowlus (of later glider fame) in a San Diego water-



Grace demolishes a plane on a set in the San Fernando Valley for the film *Young Eagles*. The photo was made on an 8X10 still camera taken by Clifton Kling. Talented cameraman Elmer Dyer captured many of the exciting aerial scenes.



Grace was the air coordinator as well as crash pilot for *Lilac Time*.



Dick Grace enjoyed writing and put his talent to work on the screenplay for *Devil's Squadron*.

front cannery building. As soon as it was done, Ryan painted his logo on the ruder and immediately marketed the aircraft. In an effort to avoid plagiarism, Ryan displayed his copy on an elevated platform at the Dutch Flat airfield in San Diego with a large banner reading "Built in San Diego." Confusing the historical origin, Ryan submitted Waterhouse's Cruzair design to the US Patent Office as his own. In 1929, Ryan was awarded "inventor" status for

the Waterhouse monoplane. The M-1 would go on to establish Ryan as an aircraft builder and would lead, of course, to the Ryan NYP flown by Charles Lindbergh. As a point of interest, it appears the operations portion of Waterhouse & Royer went to Pacific Air Transport in Klamath Falls Oregon, and that company would be the main operator of the Ryan M-1.

The first, and only, Cruzair was apparently offered

for sale and attracted the interest of Dick Grace. Grace secured the acquisition of the Cruzair with the financial backing of Grant E. Dolge of Hollywood, T.E. Robinson (Tractor Company) of Oakland, David Hill of Los Angeles, and William J. Waterhouse, the craft's designer. If the flight across the Pacific was successful, Grace reasoned that he would be able to get many financial supporters and the Cruzair would go on an exhibition tour (much like the Ryan NYP) that would handsomely reward Grace and his investors.

Grace chose to fly from Hawaii to California because the larger land mass made for an easy target, whereas other pilots needed navigators to fly from the mainland to find the small islands of Hawaii. Grace originally secured permission to use the Navy flying facilities at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor for assembly of the Cruzair and as a departure point for his Pacific flight. It was obvious that the craft's range would need to be greatly extended and extra fuel tanks were shoehorned into the rather small fuselage. After loading the aircraft with 320 gallons of fuel (it should be noted that this figure also varies in contemporary reporting with some sources stating over 400 gallons was carried), it was clear the runway on Ford Island was too short for the long takeoff run that would be needed to get the heavily-loaded plane into the air.

Grace then selected Barking Sands Airport along the western shore of the island of Kauai for the departure point. Comprising some 550 acres, the land was acquired by the Kekaha Sugar Company in 1921 and the runway was developed in stages. Barking Sands offered a three-mile-long stretch of relatively firm sandy soil covered with some thin grass. A 1.5-mile-long runway had been prepared 200 yards inland from the shores of Barking Sands years earlier by barnstormers and the extended sandy soil provided a longer takeoff run for the Cruzair. (Ultimately, Barking Sands became known as Bonham Air Force Base, and later it was subsumed into the Pacific Missile Range facility.)

Following takeoff, Grace planned to fly a predetermined dead-reckoning heading to San Francisco, along steamship lanes where the steamships would play out their



Examining the result of another one of his film crashes.



The Cruzair at Glendale, California, shortly after the plane was completed. The winged logo on the side of the fuselage is for Klamath Air Service in Oregon.

search lights in the direction of the course during the night. Grace was armed only with a magnetic compass, a clock, and rolls of toilet paper to be thrown overboard in hopes of determining wind drift. Grace would be sustained with a four-day supply of canned raisin bread, chocolate, and water. As a promotional gimmick, Grace was taking his three-week-old wire-haired terrier puppy, named Kauai Leilani, as a mascot for the flight. A wicker basket with a blanket was provided for the pup's comfort.

The 320-gallon fuel load was calculated to give Grace 29-hours of flight time. Grace knew that he would need favorable winds to successfully make the 2500-mile trip. The Cruzair was advertised to have a 117-mph cruising speed with a normal gross weight of 2450 pounds. Fully loaded, Grace's Cruzair weighed roughly 4250 pounds, which would significantly reduce the cruising airspeed. Headwinds of just 15-mph could theoretically doom the flight. As can be seen, it was relatively obvious that the projected flight could easily end in disaster.

Once the plane arrived on 24 June 1927, it was off-loaded and assembled. However, a major problem was discovered. Grace claimed that someone had sawed off part of the wood two-blade propeller. A local search for a propeller was fruitless and Grace stated that a new propeller had to be obtained in the States and shipped to Hawaii. Given the time frame involved, it seems impossible for this to have happened and one has to wonder if this "sabotage" was another



The Cruzair on what appears to be its first flight at Glendale.

attempt at gaining publicity.

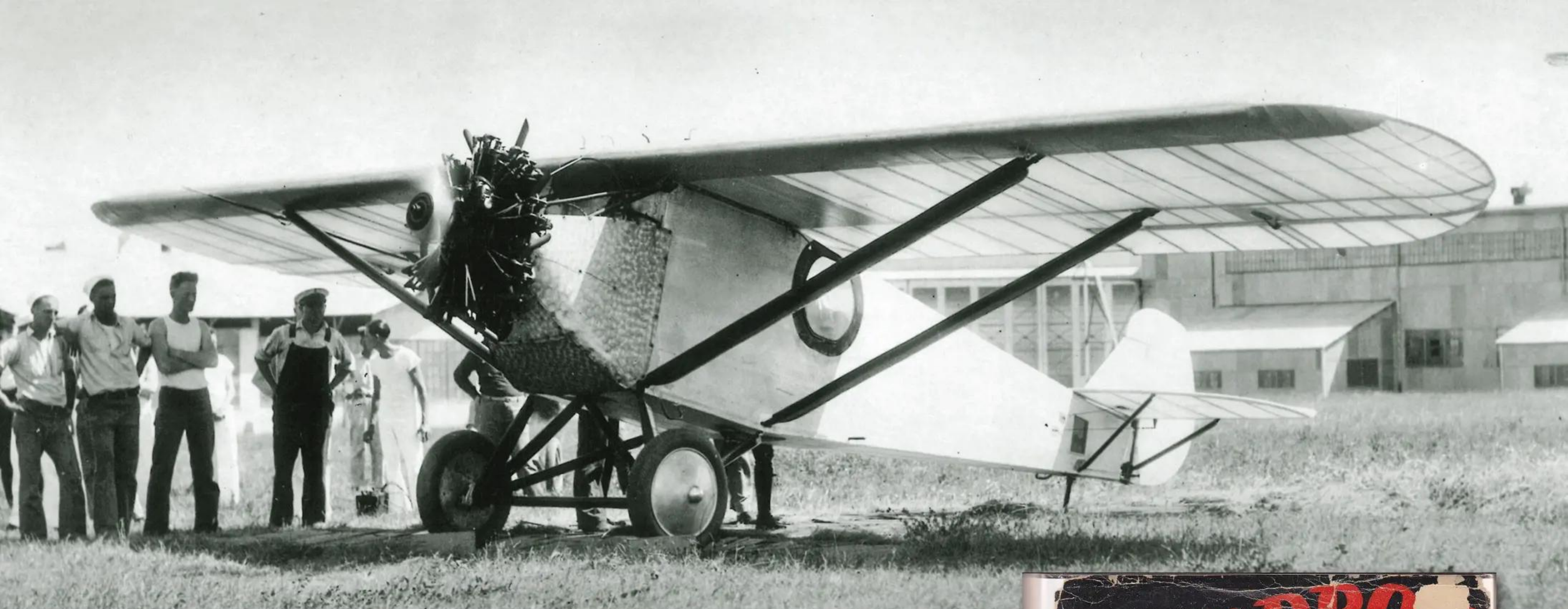
With a "new" propeller somehow sourced, Grace flew the Cruzair from Ford Island to Barking Sands on 28 June 1927. At this point, he told reporters that he would takeoff from Barking Sands "tomorrow morning or crack up trying to do it." That prediction would come back to haunt Grace. Strong headwinds (reported as 20- to 30-mph) delayed any attempts to actually become airborne for the next few days. Grace had four aborted takeoff attempts on the 2nd and 3rd of July, three of which ended in ground loops. Grace

blamed these on the heavily-loaded condition of the aircraft and on the hot sand, which he stated caused the rubber to fail. On-lookers began to wonder if Grace could even get the Cruzair off the ground, or whether he was deliberately delaying the flight until the 4th of July to capitalize on the publicity of the national holiday. A few observers more seasoned in the science of aeronautics began to wonder if the flight of the Cruzair was indeed a publicity stunt with no serious thought of actually crossing the vast Pacific.

On 4 July 1927, at 5:24 am, Grace



The Cruzair on completion of its first flight.



The Cruzair shortly after its modifications for the Hawaii-California flight. As can be seen, the structure shows through the clear-doped fabric.

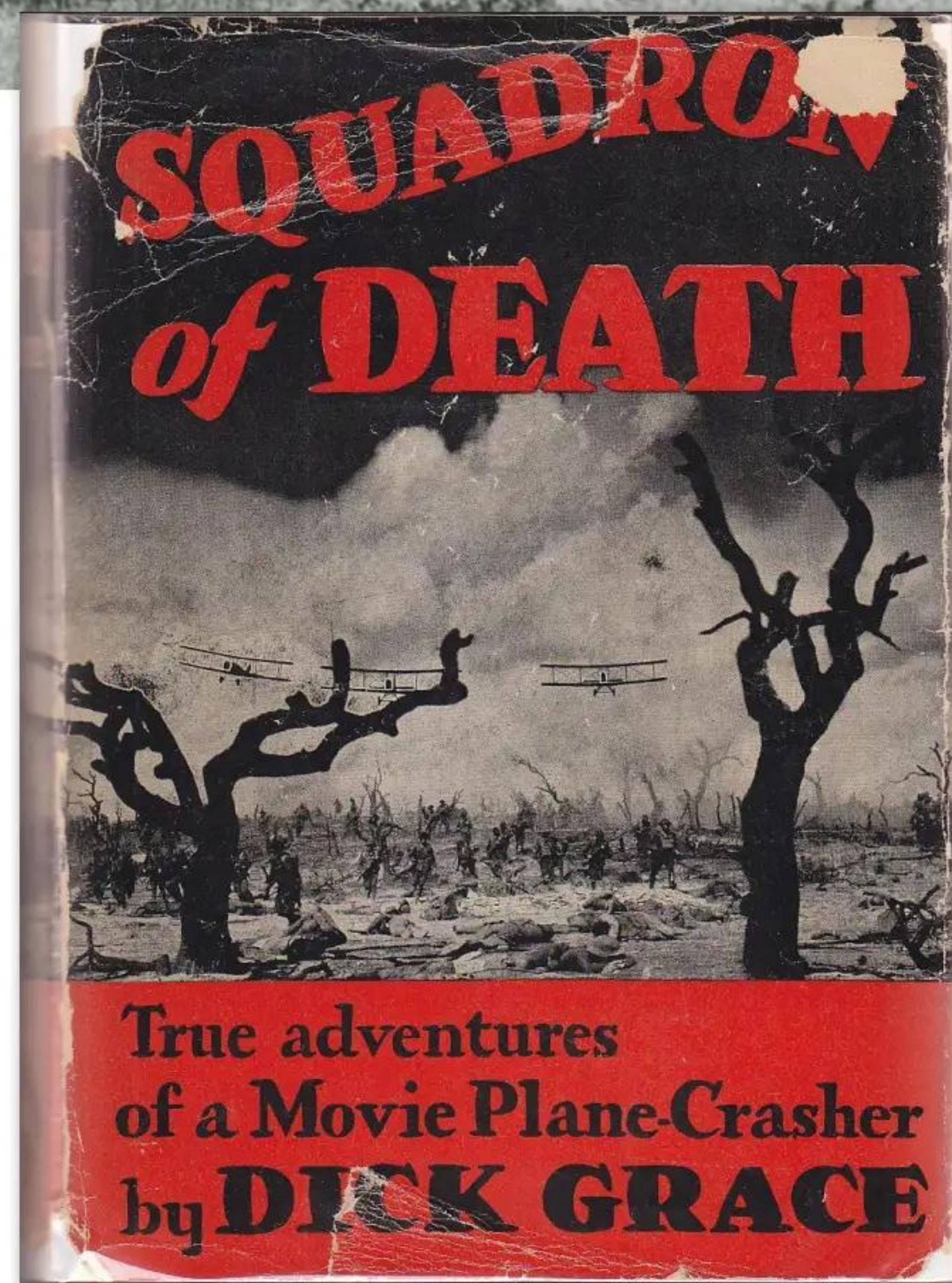
successfully took off from Barking Sands. Less than one hour later, Grace returned to Barking Sands from the south side of the island, landed in the center of the airfield and ground-looped into the kiawe trees at the side of the runway. The wire-spoked wheels broke and parts of the landing gear, fuselage, and tail were bent. The engine and propeller were undamaged. The time was 6:15 am. Reporters queried if Grace never intended to make the flight. Grace claimed the Cruzair was

“fluttering” violently in the air, which sent him into steep nose dives. On-lookers stated otherwise.

The first reporter to arrive at the crash site stated that Grace was standing up in the cockpit of the wrecked plane. Grace handed his puppy down to the reporter and climbed out of the Cruzair. Grace stated that he returned because of a tail flutter which threatened to shake the plane apart. He would later say he was “thrown 35 feet from the

plane because he did not have a seat belt” and that he “broke both hands” in the arrival. Another reporter arrived and noted that Grace may have been shaken, but that he was unhurt. Other reporters began to congregate and one observed “Grace seemed less concerned over the loss of the plane than over the impression his failure to make the flight might produce among the public throughout the world.”

Grace spoke briefly to members of the press and stated that after flying 100 to 200



***Squadron of Death* was one of Grace's books that enjoyed popularity with readers.**

miles out from Kauai, he decided to turn back because of control problems which made the plane increasingly unmanageable to continue the flight. Grace implied there were problems with the rudder and that he could not turn to the left. On 5 July, Grace claimed that the Cruzair would be shipped immediately back to Ford Island for repairs and that it would be ready for another attempt within three weeks. On 16 July, Grace embarked on the Los Angeles Steamship Company's SS *City of Honolulu*, bound for Los Angeles. Salvaged parts and the wrecked Cruzair were aboard the *City of Honolulu* to be returned to Waterhouse for repairs.

The actual 51-minute flight duration contradicts Grace's claimed flight of 100 to 200 miles out from Kauai and implying that he was flying northeast toward California. One news reporter postulated that Grace simply circumnavigated around the island of Kauai and then returned to



The Cruzair being unloaded in Hawaii. It is not known why the aircraft was not painted unless as a possible weight-saving measure. This photo shows the fuel dump pipe, located directly behind the left landing gear strut.

Barking Sands. However, such a circumnavigation would have been at least 100 miles, and could not have been accomplished in the 51-minute flight. Further, mountainous terrain over the island would have required a flight of at least 8000 feet, which would not have been possible in the heavily-laden Cruzair with control problems.

Fifty years after the aborted Grace flight, the first reporter that had arrived at the crash site recalled seeing the Cruzair returning from the same direction that it had departed Barking Sands, back-tracking down the northwestern shore of the island and that the airplane was dumping at least 100 gallons of fuel. The Cruzair made a wide left downwind turn toward Barking Sands, Grace stopped dumping fuel to reduce landing weight and made a sharp left turn onto his final approach before the crash-landing. The entire flight was within one-mile of the western shoreline of Kauai.

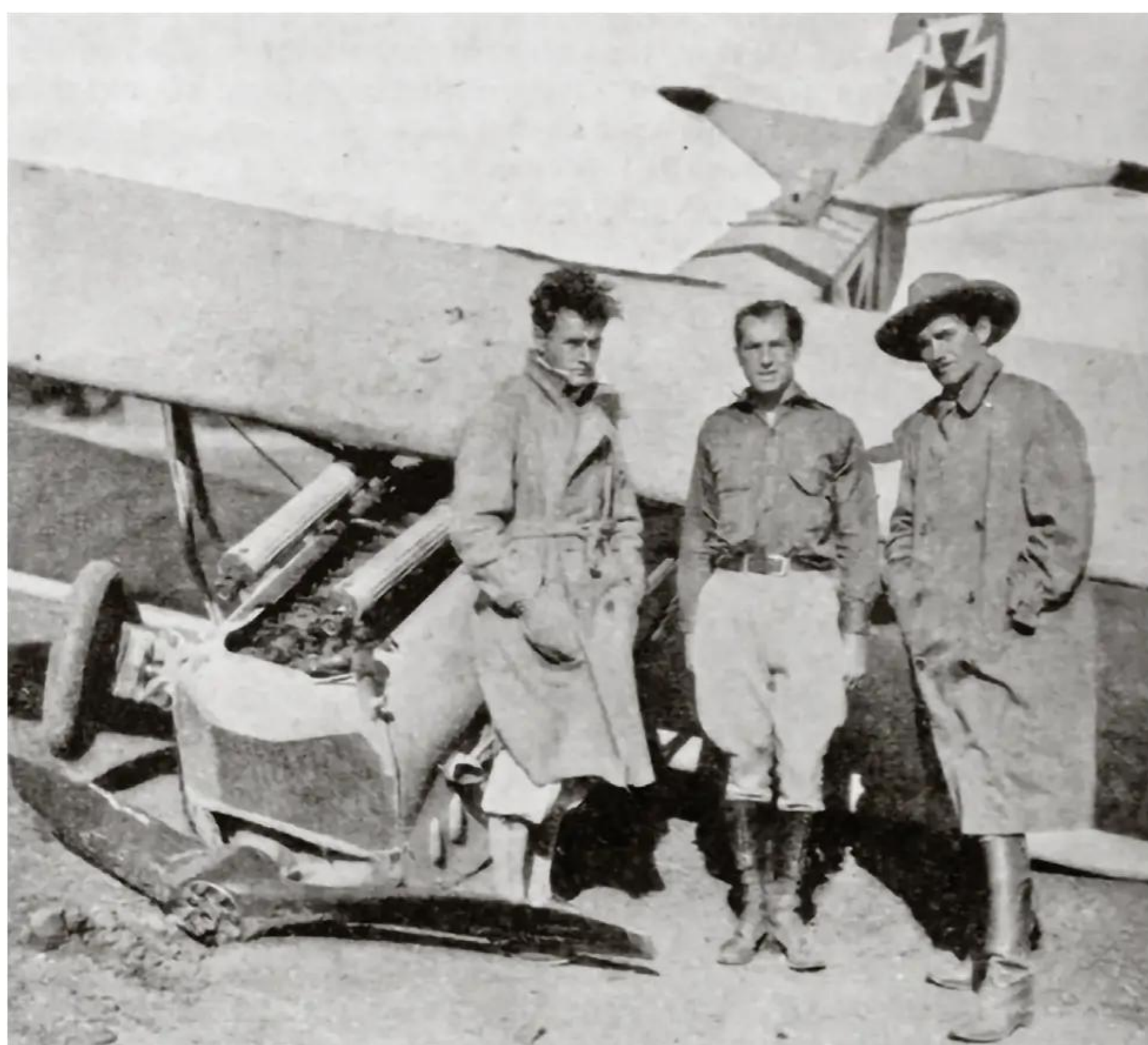
For whatever reasons he thought appropriate, Dick Grace's own accounts of the failed flight contradict those of third-party witnesses. Dick Grace published his first account in a 1929 book entitled *Squadron of Death*, and a second account in the 1950 *Visibility Unlimited* (reprinted in 1956 as *Crash Pilot*). In *Squadron of Death*, Grace claimed there was a cliff at the end of the runway, which he cleared by only 75 feet. In fact, the cliff ran parallel to the runway and was more than a mile away. Grace dropped the cliff claim in *Visibility Unlimited* but claimed that the takeoff was made in total darkness. This again was a fabrication, as the eastern horizon was light during the original takeoff. In *Squadron of Death*, Grace claimed that he was "a hundred



Grace standing in the Cruzair's entrance hatch in Hawaii.

miles from the island" when he experienced control troubles that made him turn back. In *Visibility Unlimited*, Grace stated "I was still a couple of hundred miles from the island." In a 1954 interview, Grace claimed that he flew a distance of 400 miles out from Kauai. Again, all of these distance claims are refuted by the actual 51-minute flight time.

In *Visibility Unlimited*, Grace wrote "Other equipment jarred loose and covered the dump valve, making it impossible to release the heavy load of gasoline." This directly contradicts third-party reports of Grace dumping fuel, and Grace previously admitted in 1927 that he



Grace, center, after crashing a Fokker D.VII for the film *Wings*. Director William Wellman is on the left and he was also a WWI pilot. At 5 feet 7 inches and 135 pounds, Grace used his small stature to advantage when padding the cockpits of aircraft he would crash for the cameras.

dumped at least 40 gallons of gas.

In both books, Grace claims that he flew into trees in the landing crash, but on-site witnesses saw him ground loop off the runway into the trees. In the 1954 interview, Grace claimed that the cylinders



Work being performed on the Cruzair at Hawaii. It does not appear that the aircraft carried any form of markings.



A fine portrait of Grace with the Cruzair at Barking Sand.

were broken off from the engine in the crash. In *Visibility Unlimited*, Grace wrote that he broke a hand and a rib in the crash. In *Squadron of Death*, Grace stated that he broke both hands and that he was thrown 35-feet from the airplane in the crash. Again, these claims are contradicted by the on-site witnesses who saw him standing up, uninjured in the cockpit and that the engine was undamaged.

Clearly, Dick Grace fictionalized parts of his accounts of the flight and he intentionally hid other facts in an attempt to support his story. In the end, facts seemed to be an inconvenience, and the world has widely forgotten Dick Grace's 1927 failed attempt to cross the Pacific.



Captain Dick Grace in USAAF service during WWII.

But what of Dick Grace after the aborted Hawaiian flight? He continued flying, crashing, and writing and appears to have been fairly successful. He would state he had broken "over 200 bones" in his crashes. He said he earned \$20,000 for his flying and crashes in the RKO film *The Lost Squadron* whose plot revolved around a maniac film director (played by Erich von Stroheim) making a movie that sent stunt pilots to their deaths. After more than 40 movie crashes, this style of filming went out of vogue and Grace went on to write several more stories that were optioned and made into films including *Devil's Squadron*, *Arctic Wings*, *Atlantic Flight*, and *Mirage*. These were sort of low-end films produced by RKO, Monogram, and Columbia.

After Pearl Harbor, Grace enlisted in the USAAF (with all his injuries, one has to wonder how he passed his physical) and served as an instructor at Mather Field in California before being shipped overseas in 1943 with the 486th Bomb Group where he eventually became assistant group operations officer. He wrote that he flew 44 bombing missions over Occupied Europe and Germany in Flying Fortresses and Liberators. An article in the 19 July 1945 edition of the *Los Angeles Times* calls Grace the "oldest combat flyer." (We did a quick check and found that Lester James Maitland [born 8 February 1899] is noted as being the oldest USAAF WWII pilot. After flying in WWI, he enjoyed an amazing between-the-wars career as a test pilot, race pilot, and pilot of the Fokker *Bird of Paradise* that made



The Lost Squadron was loosely based on some of Grace's WWI experiences. the first flight between the mainland and Hawaii. On 8 December 1941, he was serving at Clark Field when the Japanese attacked. On Christmas Day, he was one of a small group flown to Australia in a Twin Beech by none other than Pappy Gunn. He would go on to fly Marauders with the 386th BG in Europe at age 44 but Grace would have been 46.)

The press officer for the 486th issued a press release about Grace that read, "One of Hollywood's high-priced stunt fliers — he smashed planes in *Wings* and *Hell's Angels*, Capt. Dick Grace, 46, who bombed Germany in WWI today is doing the very same thing. Flying side-by-side with airmen who weren't born when he flew in a WWI Spad to drop a load of three 100-lb fragmentation bombs on Heligoland, Grace recently relived his past by helping bomb the island fortress again. Explaining why he turned down a desk job to become a flying operations officer, Grace said "The kind of life I've lived makes me more suited to combat flying than anything else, psychologically and in every other way. All the experience of my flying career would be lost if I could not use it where it would be of most value." Grace resumed active service in January 1943 when he rejected an offer of a direct USAAF commission, preferring to take the regular aviation cadet training with special permission. His main ambition today, Grace says, as it was more than a quarter of a century ago, is to help bomb Berlin."

After the war, Grace married his secretary and purchased a 21-acre ranch in Sherman Oaks, California. A life-long smoker, Dick Grace died of emphysema in the Veterans Hospital in West Los Angeles on 25 June 1965 at age 67. He was buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Los Angeles.

AC



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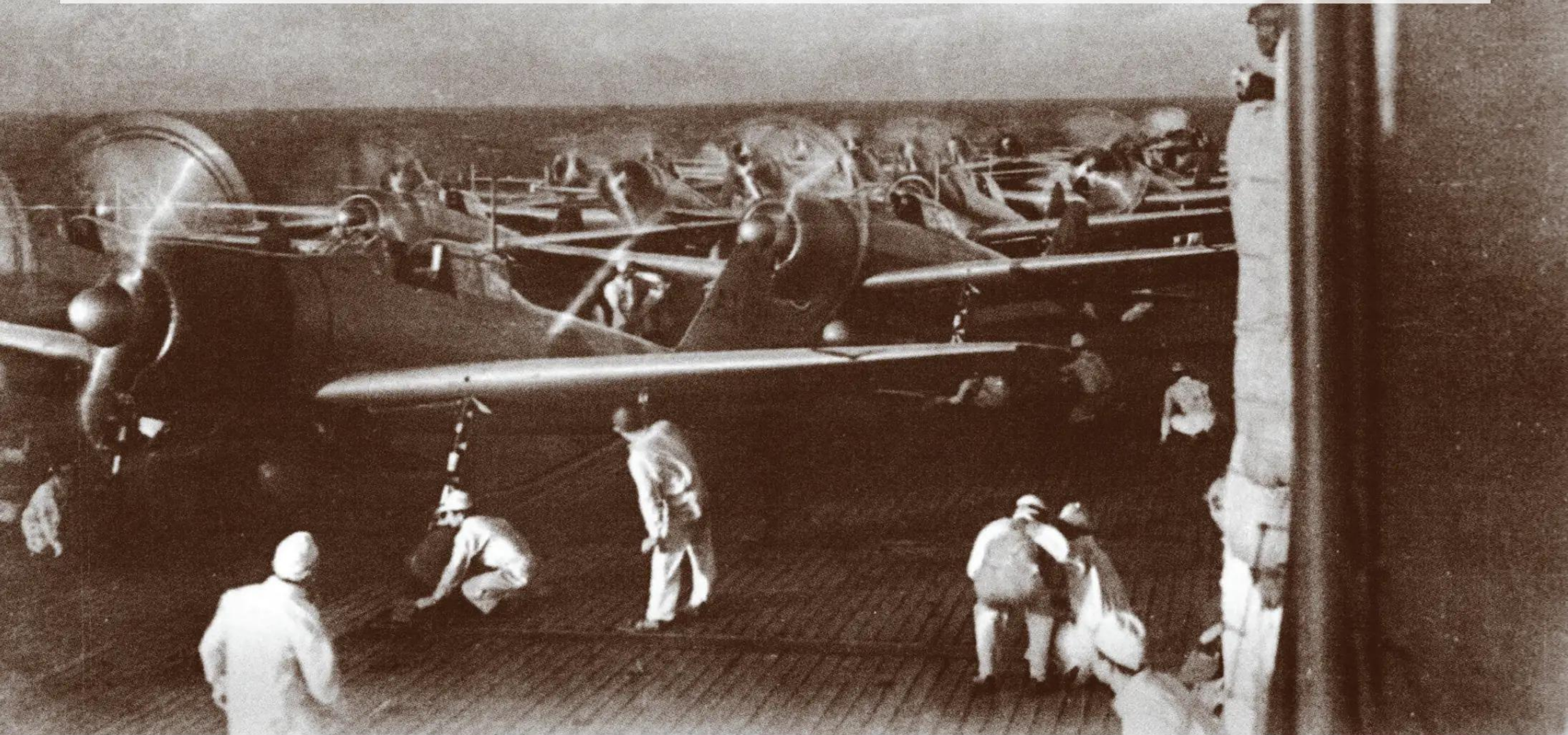
Lockheed 12 photo by
Michael Malak Photography



PEARL HARBOR ZEROS

JAPAN'S SNEAK ATTACK ON HAWAII WITH THE MITSUBISHI ZERO WOULD TAKE AMERICANS BY COMPLETE SURPRISE AND AN INTENSE EFFORT BEGAN TO ASSEMBLE SHOT-DOWN EXAMPLES AND UNDERSTAND THE NEW WARPLANE ALONG WITH ITS THREAT TO AMERICA

BY HOWARD CARTER



They had but one mission — to destroy American property and kill as many American citizens as possible. Prior to leading his flight of nine Mitsubishi A6M2 Zeros from the deck of the carrier IJN *Akagi*, the mood of the Japanese aviators was almost festive. As warriors of the Emperor, L/Cmdr. Shigeru Itaya briefed his Zero pilots and urged them to destroy the enemy. Itaya was commander of the

first wave of Zeros that would be hitting Pearl Harbor and he and his men had carefully gone over photos and maps of the area while an intelligence officer briefed them on what to expect. It was early Sunday morning, 7 December 1941, and the Japanese knew that the “lazy” Americans would be worshipping their God while being extremely lax on military discipline.

After manning their sleek Zero

fighters, each adorned with a blood-red fuselage stripe to indicate their carrier, a successful launch took place and just before 8 am Itaya and his nine Zeros were roaring down the western slopes of the Koolau Mountains. The fighters were flying above a force of 26 Aichi D3A1 dive-bombers that had taken off from IJN *Shokaku* and heading toward Ford Island and Hickam Field. The lumbering D3A1s, with their fixed

Surviving photographs of Japanese Zeros used in the Pearl Harbor attack are limited and well-known. Aboard the carrier *Akagi*, nine Zeros and 27 Kates are running up their engines prior to launching on the first wave attack on Pearl Harbor. The Zero force was made up of three flights (*shotai*) of three Zeros each. Zeros with horizontal yellow stripes led each three-plane flight.

landing gear, looked a bit obsolete but they were not. The dive-bombers were somewhat similar to the *Luftwaffe's* Junkers Ju 87 *Stukas* in that they were extremely effective in their mission — as long as they were guarded from attacking fighters and that was the mission of Itaya's Zero force.

Turning toward the Nuuanu Pali mountain pass, Itaya spotted a pair of brightly-colored light civilian training aircraft. Even though they were civilian and of no importance to the overall mission, Itaya attacked along with the two Zeros of his *shotai* (a three-plane flight). However, he probably did not realize just how slow the trainers were flying and he overshot his target. His wingmen, Petty Officers First Class Shinaji Iwama and Takeshi Hirano saw his mistake and corrected accordingly. Both fired and a fusillade of shells ripped into the forward fuselage of a Piper Cub, destroying the motor mount and ripping the Continental 65-hp engine from the plane.

In the Cub, Marcus Poston, who was a Machinist Mate 2nd Class aboard USS *Argonne*, was using his early Sunday morning hours to take a flying lesson among the sun-dappled clouds. Fortunately, the flying school that operated the trainers made it a requirement that students wear parachutes. Poston, not exactly knowing what was happening, realized he was in a world of hurt and he rolled out the side of the entry door to begin a free fall before safely opening his parachute.

At this point, the Zeros knew they had air superiority and they broke away from the dive-bombers and flew over Honolulu, heading to attack John Rodgers Field and Hickam Field. At this point, Cornelia Fort, a 22-year-old instructor, was training her student in a new two-seat Interstate Cadet. She was quickly spotted by the attackers. Cornelia would later record, "On the downwind leg of the field just prior to the last landing I was going to have him [the student] make before soloing, I looked casually around and saw a military plane coming in from the sea [heading] directly towards me. I jerked the controls away from my student and jammed the throttle wide open to pull above the oncoming plane. He passed



Zero AI-101 (seen in background aboard *Akagi*) was flown by Tadao Kimura and took part in the second wave attack. It appears that the Zero also took part in the fighting at Midway and was probably lost when *Akagi* was sunk.

so close under us that our celluloid windows rattled violently [this Zero pilot also apparently misjudging his speed]."

Fort got her light aircraft on the runway but was still the target of strafing Zeros as was a Douglas DC-3 operated by Hawaiian Airlines. Loaded with passengers, the transport began to burn and on one of the strafing passes, a Japanese shell broke open a fire extinguisher and this put out the fire.

A flight of Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses was in-bound from California's Hamilton Field and just happened to arrive during the Japanese attack. For the long ferry flight, the bombers were not carrying their defensive machine guns. The Zero pilots mistook the bombers for transports but quickly attacked the large four-engine aircraft. Lieutenant

Robert Richards was in command of a B-17C and he was attacked by Flier 1st Class Juichiro Hanyu who riddled the Fortress. Several aboard were wounded and Richards broke away to the east and headed towards Bellows Field for landing.

Itaya and his *shotai* attacked Lt. Raymond Swenson's B-17C. Hirano and Iwama passed in the opposite



A Zero pilot with AI-101 in the background.



AI-108 takes off from the *Akagi*. This view shows the large centerline fuel tank to advantage.



Commanding officer of *Shokaku* looks on as aircraft takeoff for the raid on Pearl Harbor. On the left is a *Kanji* message exhorting the pilots to do their duty.



To the cheers of the flight deck crew, Zero E11-111 launches from the *Zuikaku*. This was the second carrier in the Fifth Division and the Zero's tail code meant "E" for Fifth Division, "II" for second ship, "111" for individual fighter number. The aircraft had two white fuselage stripes that also indicated Fifth Division, second ship.

direction on Swenson's starboard side to come in on the bomber's rear. Once again, speed was misjudged and they overshot the bomber. However, Itaya had learned from his first mistake and, matching the bomber's speed, he began firing from just 100 feet. His shells set off signal flares in the radio compartment as he "walked" his gun fire through the bomb bay and into the cockpit. A slug hit Flight Surgeon 1st Lt. William Schick in the back and with the fire now out of control in the cabin, Swenson got the plane on the ground. Crew and passengers quickly evacuated the burning aircraft and Schick walked to the nearby hospital but died before doctors could attend to his wounds.

The Zeros proceeded across the ship harbor in order to attack Hickam Field but would have to fly over Fort Kamehameha in the process. As this was happening, the destroyer USS *Helm* was getting up to steam and heading out to sea past the USS *Bobolink*, a minesweeper, that was moored in the channel. Gunners on both ships opened fire on the Zeros as they headed toward Hickam. At this point, ground units were also firing on the enemy aircraft.

Takeshi Hirano's Zero came under fire as the fighter passed overhead and aboard the *Helm*, Gunner's Mate 2nd Class W.O. Huff fired at the aircraft and then saw it drop behind a tree line and crash near Hickam. He would receive a commendation for the action but this is where the fog of war enters into the picture. At this point, many guns were firing at the Zeros including those of the 55th Coast Artillery and the men manning those weapons also received commendations for downing the Zero.

It appears the enemy aircraft's engine had been damaged and Hirano attempted to land gear-up on a street in Fort Kamehameha. However, his port wing clipped one of the many palm trees in the area and this caused the plane to roll to the right and crash into the entrance of the ordnance machine shop.

Personnel from the 41st Coast Artillery were lined up waiting to get rifles and ammunition and had taken cover in front of the ordnance building as the fighter crashed. Four enlisted men were killed by the impact. It appears that Hirano's seat or shoulder harness

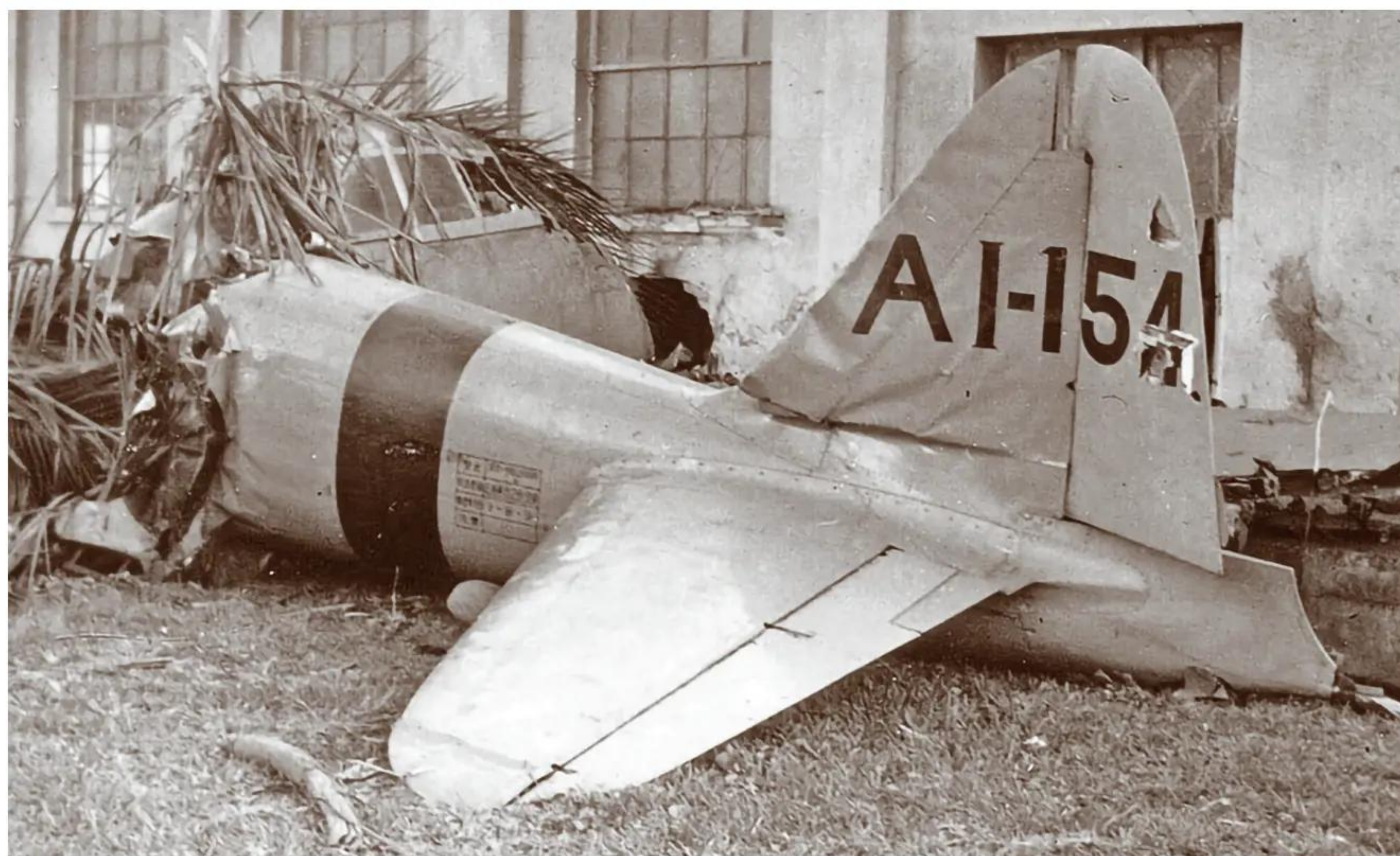


A Zero trails smoke after being hit by Navy anti-aircraft fire at Pearl Harbor to become one of the nine Zeros lost during the raid.

failed with the impact and he was violently pushed into the instrument panel and instantly killed.

At the nearby motor pool, Pvt. Creed Shortt was taking the early morning to clean his ambulance. Told of the fighter crashing, he jumped into the vehicle and headed toward the scene — picking up nine wounded men and transporting them to the hospital. By this time, a guard had been placed near the wreckage so that people would not smoke because considerable aviation fuel had spilled from the aircraft's ruptured tanks. However, there was little to stop soldiers from examining the aircraft and pulling out bits and pieces as some for the first "war prizes" of the deadly attack.

First Lieutenant Glenn Elliott, who was the assistant operations officer of harbor defenses, ran to the wrecked aircraft. He would later report that, "There were several military men at the scene when I arrived... [and they] helped me with the canopy while up on the wing so that I could reach the pilot." Sergeant Ronald Moton got onto the wing and reached into the cockpit so "I picked his head up by the top of the helmet and pulled his head back and all that I could see that wasn't smashed were his slant eyes."



It is not known if Takeshi Hirano was attempting to land his damaged Zero on a street or whether he was making a suicide dive at the Americans gathered by the building to receive weapons and ammunition. Zero AI-154 clipped palm trees with a wing (note the palm fronds atop the canopy) and this cartwheeled the fighter into the ground. The gloss paint is shown to advantage in this view along with the blood red fuselage stripe.



A Navy photographer was almost immediately on the scene to take the historic photos of the wrecked Zero AI-154 next to Fort Kamehameha's ordnance machine shop.

BATTLE OF NI'IHAU

THE UNUSUAL COMBAT BETWEEN A ZERO PILOT AND HAWAIIAN CITIZENS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PEARL HARBOR ATTACK



The Japanese thought the small island of Ni'ihau would be uninhabited and an ideal location for damaged aircraft to land so that the crews could later be picked up by submarines. It came as a surprise that there was a small group of Hawaiians on the island and they were in no mood to give into the Japanese invader.



Shigenori Nishikaichi as an aviation cadet.



The Zero after Nishikaichi and collaborator Harada torched the aircraft so it would not fall into American hands.

The Japanese had made a mistake. Their intelligence reported that the Hawaiian island of Ni'ihau was uninhabited and thus an ideal landing spot for aircraft damaged in the raid on Pearl Harbor. The aviators were briefed prior to the mission that if their aircraft were hit and unable to make it back to the carriers, then Ni'ihau would be an ideal spot to crash-land and crews could then await rescue by submarine.

As part of the second wave, PO1C Shigenori Nishikaichi was flying a Zero coded BII-120 from the carrier *Hiryu*. Early during the attack, the Zero's engine was apparently hit by anti-aircraft fire and the pilot knew that he would not be able to make it back to the carrier. However, he was able to nurse the dying engine to Ni'ihau where he picked out a flat piece of land and made a perfect belly-landing (oddly, the Zero came down with the drop tank still in place so the pilot either could not jettison the tank or simply forgot to do so). Examining photos of the propeller blades, it appears that the engine was not running as Nishikaichi came in for the crash-landing. Unknown to the pilot was the fact that the island was inhabited by a small number of Hawaiians who performed farming and other duties for the reclusive Robinson family who had purchased the island decades earlier. There was no electricity (or much else) on the island and thus the residents had no idea about the Pearl Harbor attack.

The fighter came down near where Hawila Kaleohano was standing. He knew that relations between the USA and Japan were not good and he recognized the aircraft as Japanese by its insignia. The pilot, a bit stunned, emerged from the cockpit and Kaleohano immediately seized his pistol and various papers before the pilot could react. More Hawaiians were soon on the scene and they treated

the pilot with respect and prepared a dinner for him later that afternoon. Since none of the Hawaiians could speak Japanese, they sent for Ishimatus Shintani who was married to a native Hawaiian. Shintani spoke briefly with the pilot and then departed with no explanation.

The puzzled Hawaiians then sent for Yoshio Harada and his wife Irene, both of Japanese ancestry and the only others on the island that could speak Japanese. The pilot told Harada of the attack on Pearl Harbor and Harada withheld this information from the Hawaiians. Nishikaichi also wanted his papers and maps returned since he had been told not to let them fall into American hands. At this point, the Haradas decided to side with the pilot and obtain his papers and aid him in an escape.

Later that night while using a battery-powered radio, the Hawaiians learned of the attack. The pilot was permitted to stay with the Haradas but the Hawaiians installed five guards around the house. By 12 December, there was just a lone guard and he was overpowered by the pilot and Harada and the pair also managed to obtain the pistol and a shotgun. Learning of the escape, the Hawaiians fled their houses to hide.

Nishikaichi's main mission at this point was to destroy the Zero, regain or destroy his papers and maps, and hopefully catch the promised submarine back to Japan. With the help of the Haradas, he removed one of the 7.7mm machine guns and ammunition from the aircraft before setting it on fire. The pair then headed for Kaleohano's house which they also set on fire to destroy the papers but those had been taken by Kalehano when he fled.

Harada let it be known to the gathered Hawaiians that everyone in the village would be killed if the papers were not returned. Both the pilot and the Haradas were exhausted by their efforts and when Nishikaichi handed the shotgun to Harada, Ben Kanahele and his wife Ella jumped the pair. Nishikaichi pulled his pistol as Ella grabbed his arm but Harada pulled her off the pilot and he then shot Kanahele three times. Badly wounded, the Hawaiian picked up the Japanese pilot and threw him against a stone wall. Ella then grabbed a rock and crushed his skull. Seeing what happened, Harada killed himself with the shotgun.

The battle for Ni'ihau was over.

The two surviving residents of Japanese ancestry were both imprisoned. Ben Kanahele recovered and was awarded a Medal for Merit and the Purple Heart during 1945 but oddly his wife Ella did not



Americans liked taking souvenirs and the Ni'ihau Zero was no exception. Someone had neatly cut off the fabric on the rudder showing part of the aircraft identifier.

receive any form of official recognition.

The remains of the Zero were studied by Americans who finally arrived on the island and they also took the maps and papers saved by the Hawaiians. Some components such as landing gear and propeller were removed from Zero but it was just left to the elements. However, islanders would take bits and pieces from the Zero and put them to other uses such as fashioning cooking utensils.

The betrayal of the Hawaiians by those of Japanese ancestry would have far reaching results and these actions influenced the mass internment of Japanese Americans. After decades of exposure to the elements, the remains of the Zero were put on display in 2006 at the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum. However, an element of the Japanese-American population criticized the wording regarding the incident. The Haradas and their treacherous actions against the native Hawaiians were "sanitized" in the display's final wording. This political correctness also bothered the Robinson family who had donated the aircraft and there was criticism from native Hawaiians who felt the explanation left a lot to be desired.



What is left of the Zero is now on display at the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum.



American personnel, probably still stunned by the attack, examine the wreckage. Almost immediately, bits and pieces of the aircraft were taken as souvenirs.

Elliott also commented, "He was already dead but in good condition, not a lot of blood and pretty much intact. I took a map from the cockpit and looked for his identification." The pilot's wallet was found along with some American and Japanese money. The map would prove to be important and it was soon whisked away to the intelligence office. After Elliott departed the wreck, more souvenir hunters swarmed the aircraft and removed data tags and anything else that could be easily pried off the airframe. The pilot's Nambu pistol was also souvenired.

The intelligence office was at Fort Shafter and all employees were quickly called in along with translators. The map was studied as a counterattack was planned but since the translators were not quickly available, the map was driven to Hickam Field. After quickly examining the map, Maj. Gen Frederick Martin, commander of the Hawaiian Air Force, had four Douglas A-20 Havocs armed and they took off at 1127. However, since the map showed about ten courses that had been laid out to arrive at a point northwest of Oahu, there was a great deal of confusion as to which way the Havocs should fly in order to attack the enemy carriers.

The wreckage of Hirano's Zero was gathered up and transported via a flatbed truck to Hickam Field. On the evening of 8 December, the wreck was laid out on the hangar floor of the Hawaiian Air Depot and the pieces were put together somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle. There were some immediate



A soldier points to damage on the Hirano Zero.

puzzles — the typeface on the vertical tail was different on each side and there was confusion over the unit code being "AI" or "AI."

A preliminary report on the fighter was prepared by 10 December and it was dispatched to Washington, DC, along with 23 photos on 22 December. Using a US Army manual on Japanese aircraft identification, the plane was matched to "Fighter Type 100" and this information had come out of China. The engine was thought to be a Pratt & Whitney by one examiner while another stated that it simply was of "Jap make." Given the damage to the airframe, dimensions were recorded as accurately as possible.

The propeller was identified as a "two-position Hamilton Standard." It was also noted that "all guns could not

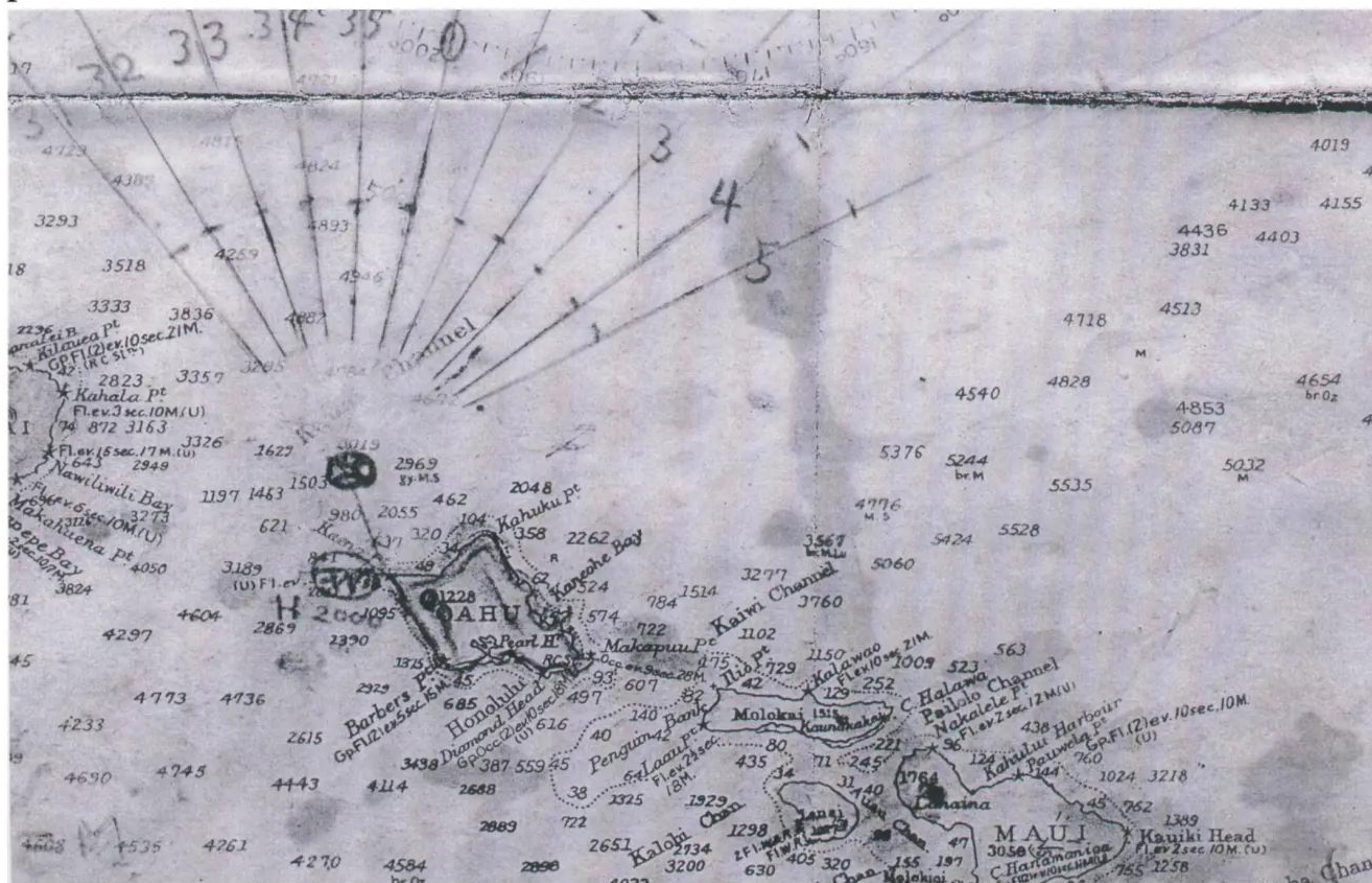
Artist Jack Fellows depiction of AI-154 during the attack on Pearl Harbor.



be fired simultaneously. Operated by button control for 20mm or .30-caliber.” It was also noted that there was no armor plate to protect the pilot but that there was a rubber bladder flotation device built into the rear fuselage behind the pilot and this would keep the plane afloat if it were ditched.

As the inspectors delved deeper into the airframe, they found another map and this was immediately rushed to intelligence where it was found to be identical to a map recovered from a midget sub that had washed up near Bellows Field.

Second Lieutenant Charles Olson



American intelligence officers closely studied Hirano’s map in order to launch attacks on the Japanese carrier force.

and Warrant Officer Paul Grossman had the responsibility of assembling all the individual notes and reports into a comprehensive file on Zero AI-154. This was the start of a number of misinterpretations regarding the origins of the aircraft design. “Concrete information can be obtained by taking readings [translations] of each data plate and position readings of all dials, controls, and switches. North American Aviation Company people might be able to give the design,” recorded Grossman and this was the beginning of a series of mistakes about the Zero being a “copy” of American technology.

One early note stated, “Airplane: Good copy of Vultee made in 1936 for export. Engine: Good copy of Pratt & Whitney R-1535 with reduction gear and about 650 horsepower.” This referred to the Vultee P-66 and, of course, the Zero had little in common with that failed design except for the fact it was a low-wing monoplane with retractable gear and a radial engine.

Colonel E.W. Raley from the



The force of impact propelled Hirano into the instrument panel, killing him instantly.

intelligence headquarters at Hickam revisited the wreck and made some further examinations that corrected earlier errors. He wrote, "Please note that the engine is said to be about 650-hp, which I believe to be in error. Note also the memorandum states practically positive no carrier arresting gear on airplane. I know from personal inspection that the airplane is equipped with an arresting hook."

The fact that a lot of the data plates had been "lifted" by military personnel caused problems. Colonel Walter Philipps sent out a memo on 11 December to all G-2 (intelligence) offices: "All military equipment, accessories, etc. and clothing and other articles that could possibly be of value as intelligence found in enemy aircraft or on enemy personnel [is to] be turned in at the earliest possible moment. All captured material is the property of the United States Government. The removal or retention of same for personal souvenirs is a court martial offense." However, this brought only a few bits that were returned to G-2.

As each report came in, more errors were made. A report from the instrument repair section stated that the instruments were "probably Japanese but were similar to American models such as US Gauge Company or Pioneer Instrument Company" and that the pitot tube was "possibly British or German."

Final reports were turned in on 16 December and the metal repair branch

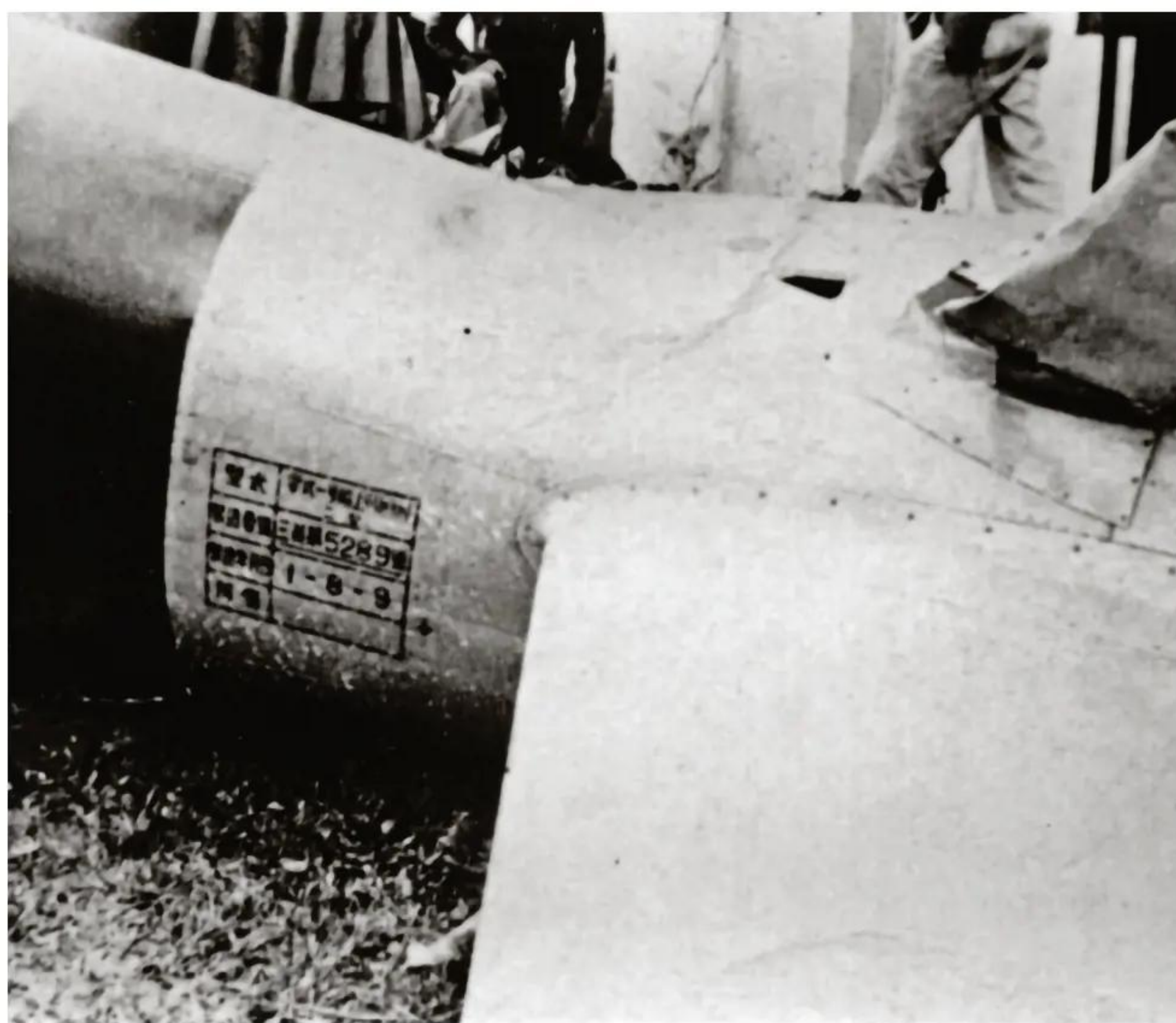
noted, "Workmanship, good; average quality castings; spars laminated; dope on fabric seems to be smoother and more pliable than ours. Fabric is of greater strength. The metal used seems to be brittle and not very pliable." An investigator from the Signal Corps reported that the radio compass, dial and loop control, and compass dynamotor were American-made, while the transmitter and receiver were German/Japanese with a few American parts.

The propeller repair section recorded that, "The propeller is almost identical with our Hamilton-Standard 3E50-297 series. The blades are made of aluminum alloy and seem to be a perfect copy of ours. The internal parts of the propeller have regular part numbers as

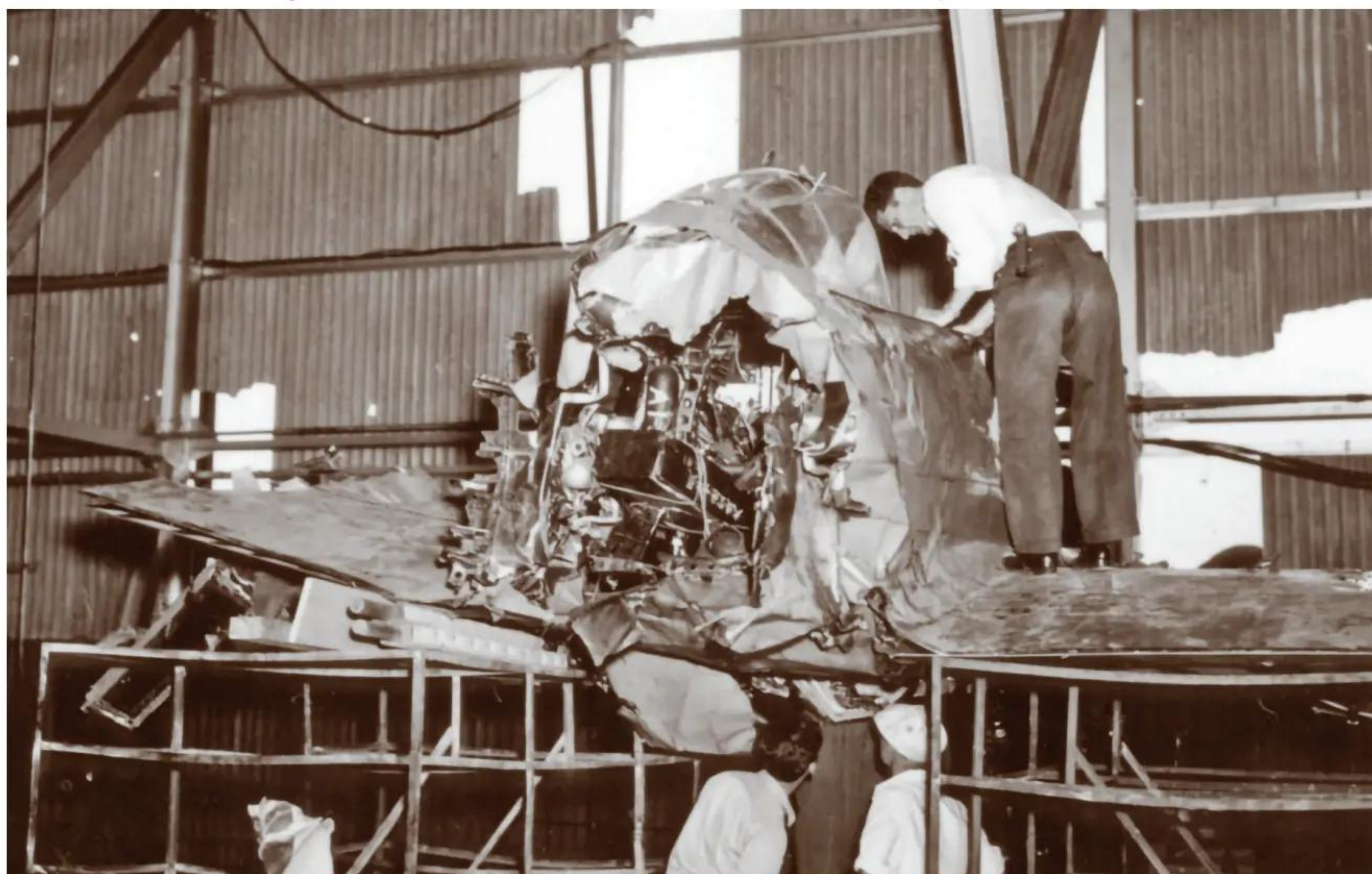
listed in our 03-A parts catalogue. The propeller is about 1937 vintage, as the improvements noted were being used at that time."

The brakes were "made about the principle of the Bendix system" the report noted. The landing gear unit also noted that the tail wheel housing was built substantially enough to act as a tail skid. The report on the electrical system stated that the generator voltage and current regulator was a 1933 Eclipse design while the starter "appears to be of Eclipse manufacture with Japanese name plates."

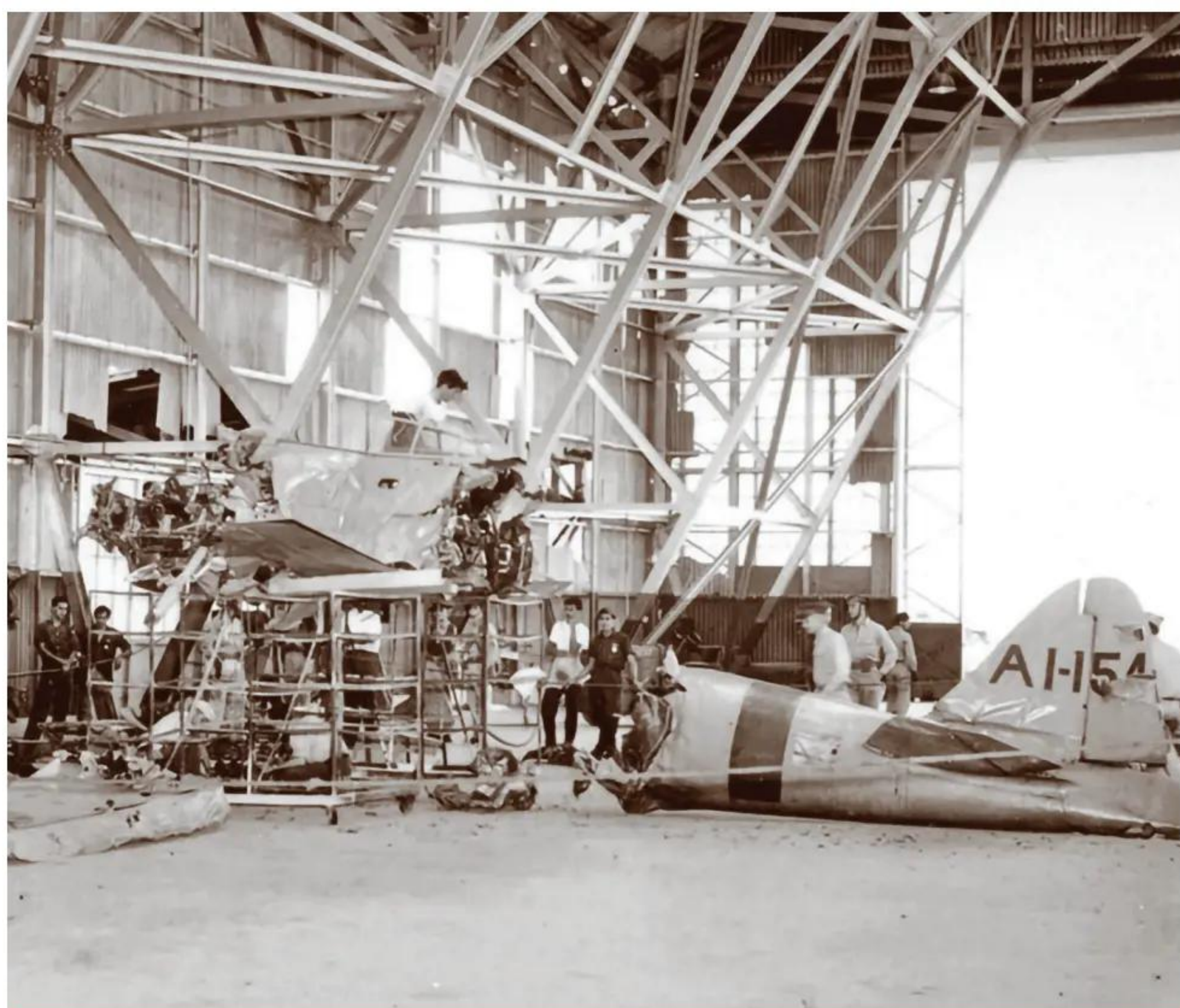
The individuals assigned to examine the engine wrote, "Engine is a Nakajima Aircraft Company product. Horsepower 850/900, 14 cylinders, 5-in bore, similar



Detail showing the data block painted on the rear fuselage of AI-154.



The wreck of AI-154 was moved to a Hawaiian Air Depot hangar where an examination of the airframe, engine, and systems almost immediately began. Unfortunately, many of the conclusions in the final report were incorrect.



Since the damage to AI-154 was so extensive, there was no hope of rebuilding the aircraft.



Flotation device located in the rear fuselage of AI-154 is examined.

to Wright R-975-7 cylinders. Nose section: Copy of the Farman type/ Wright or same as Wright.

“Impeller is a copy of General Electric. Blower section is a copy of the Wright Whirlwind 14, the power section is a copy of the 14-cylinder Pratt & Whitney, valve mechanism is a copy of P&W. Carburetor is the updraft type, poorly designed or copied from the old type Stromberg. The hand starter is a good copy of the Romec Type F-4.” Hydraulics were noted as copies of American items. The report continued, “Fuel pump similar to the M600 fuel pump. Selector valves similar to Poppet type valve; the oil strainer was apparently fully automatic as there is no hand-turning attachment yet similar to the Cuno oil strainer 12547.”

For whatever reason, the ordnance section was a day late with its report

and it stated, “Two 20mm cannon mounted in wing, unsynchronized, carry approximately 25/50 rounds of ammunition seemingly of Swiss design. Two Vickers synchronized in fuselage, down motion charging assembly on feeding side of gun. Firing mechanism on top of gun.

Colonel Raley took the Hawaiian Air Depot reports and made a rough draft compilation report that was ready on Christmas Day. In this, he identified the Zero as Mitsubishi serial 3277 for AI-154 even though the essential data plates were missing. The serial number turned out to be incorrect and was probably from another aircraft’s replacement part.

Once the examination was completed, the Zero was crated and shipped to Wright Field for further study. However, it was also put on

display with other Japanese wrecks for an Army Day parade that took place on 5 April 1942 in Dayton.

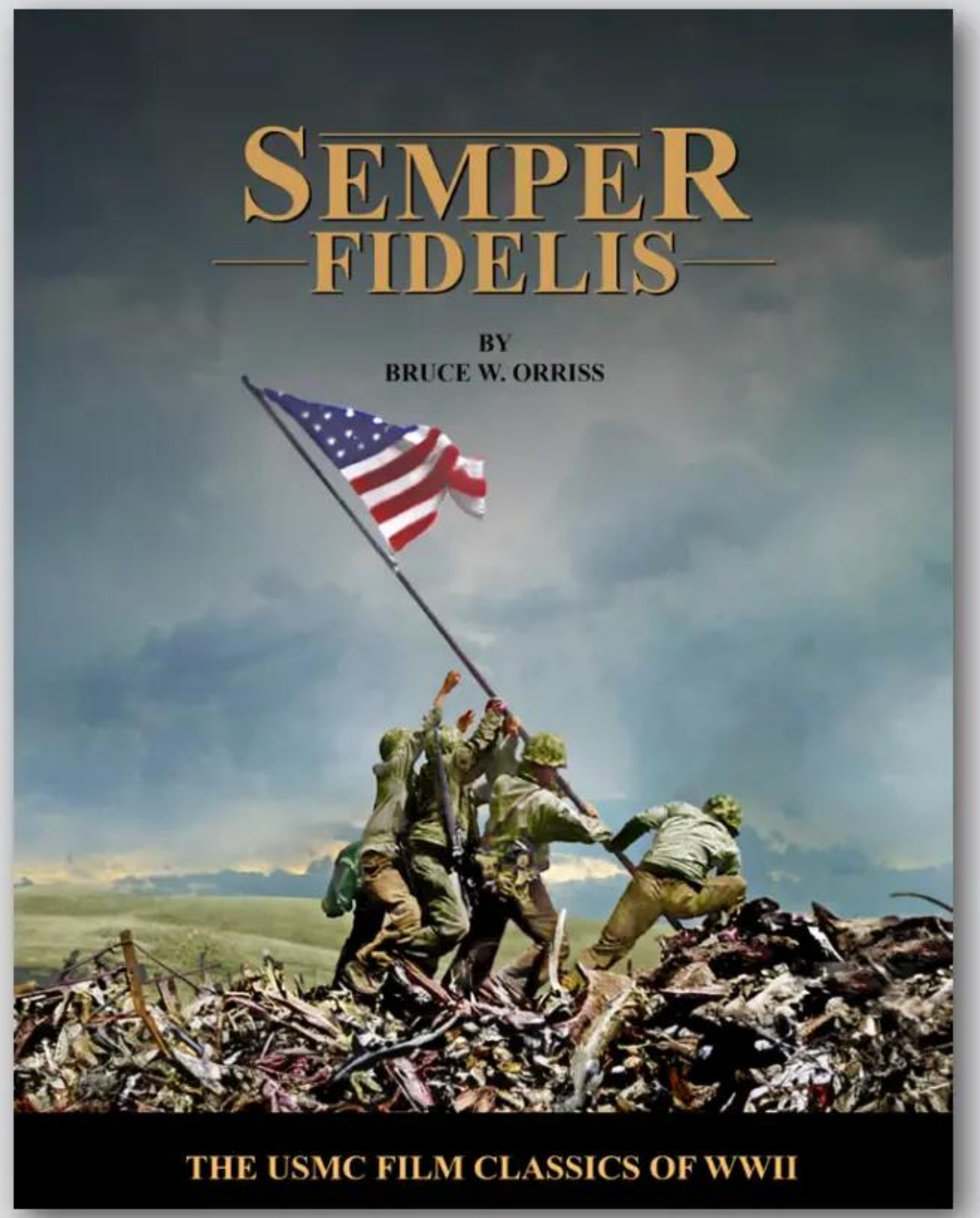
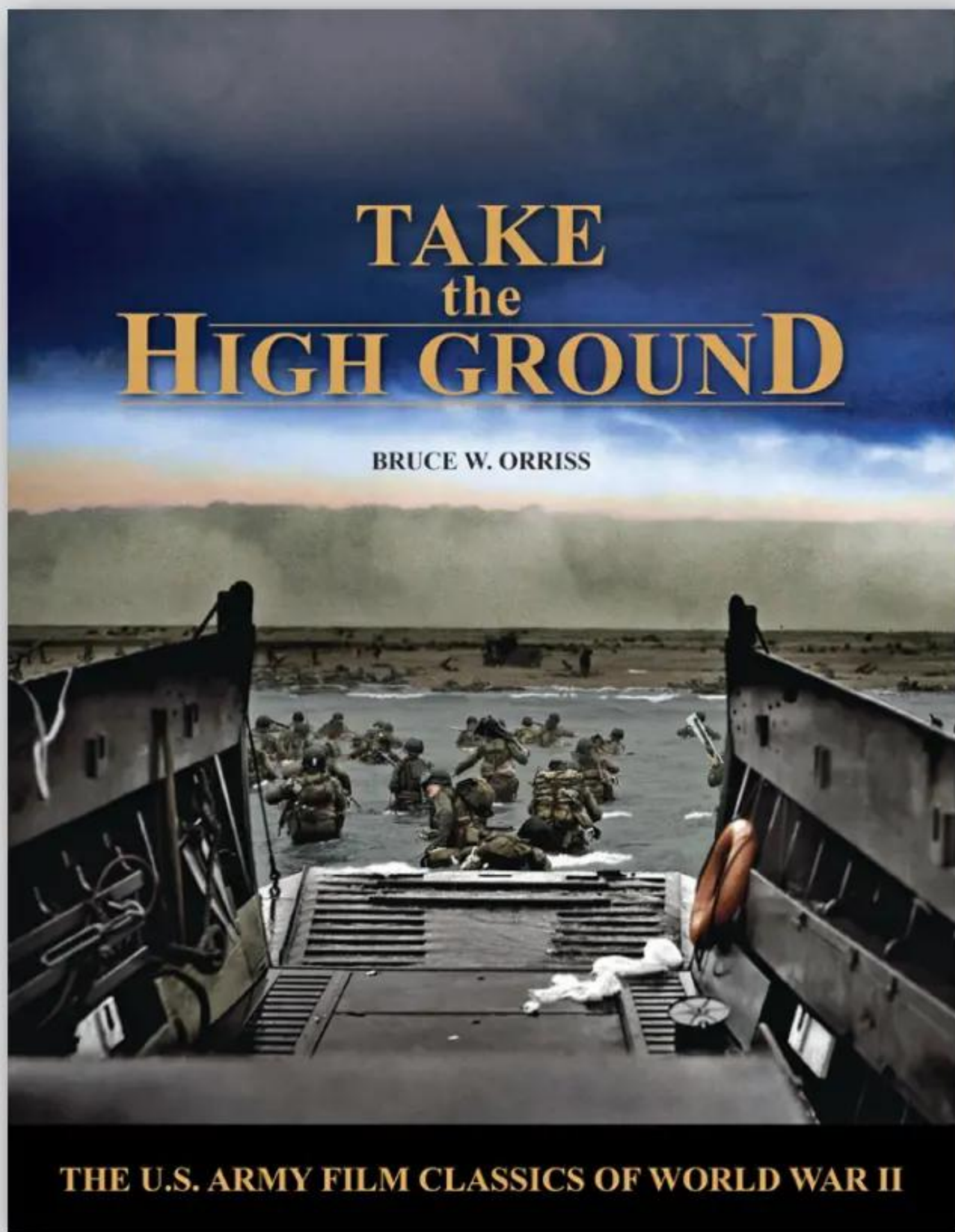
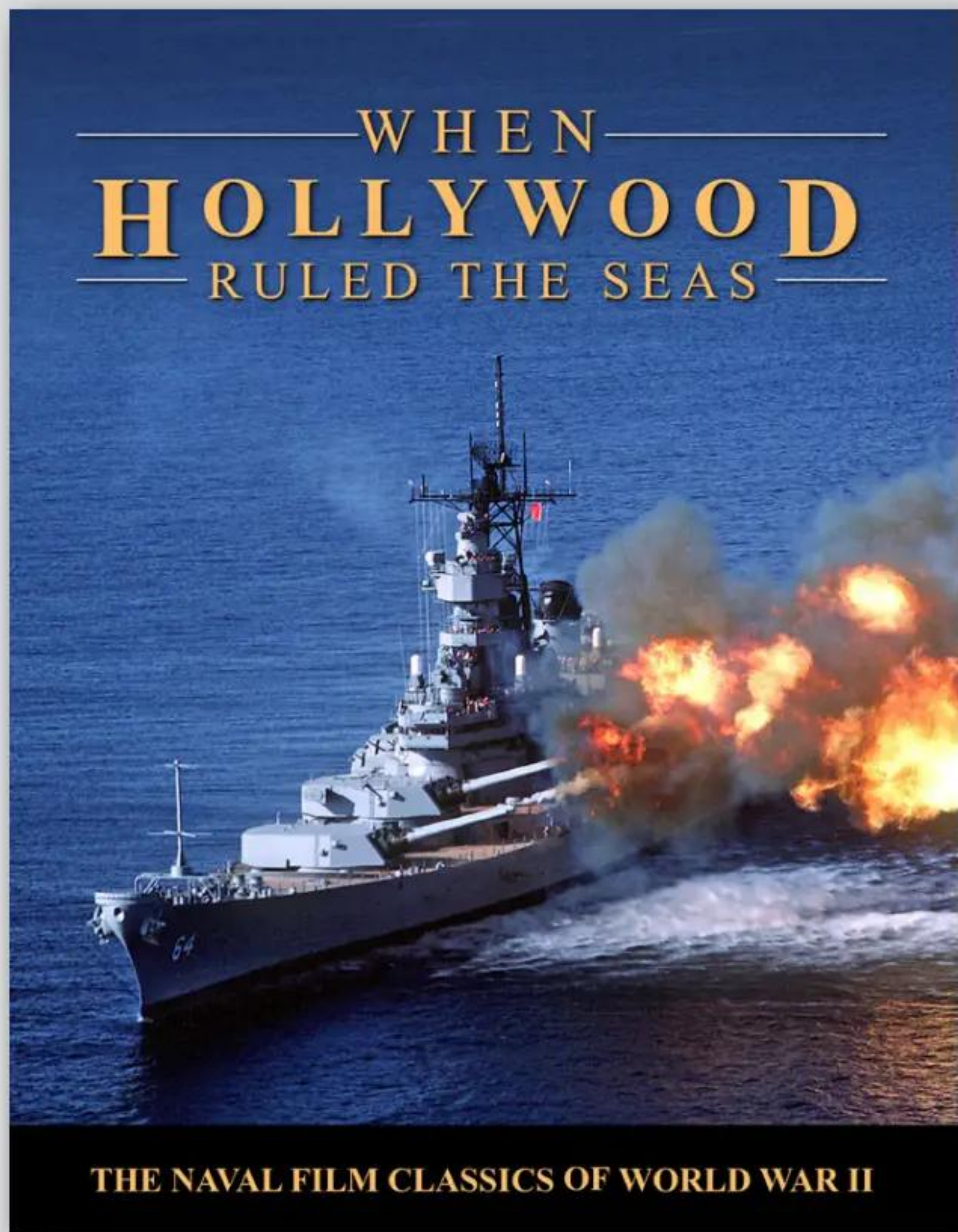
While accurate in some respects, the report gave the incorrect impression that the Zero was a copy derived from various American designs. Rumors also started about the “invincibility” of the Zero and this would delay American tactics being created to meet and defeat the enemy fighter. It would not be until the discovery of the intact Zero in the Aleutians that a correct summary of the Zero and its abilities could be made as can be seen in the following article.

There were nine Zeros and nine Zero pilots lost (out of 29 enemy aircraft destroyed from a total of 353 aircraft, including 79 Zeros, launched from four heavy carriers) in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During the first wave attack, three Zeros were lost: PO1C Takashi Hirano from the *Akagi* along with PO2C Seinsoshin Sano and PO2C Toru Haneda from the *Kaga* failed to return. During the second wave attack when American forces were now on the alert, six Zeros were lost. These included Lt. Fusata Iida, PO1C Shun-Ichi Atsumi, and PO2C Saburo Ishii and they were all from the same *hiko shotai* (element) flying from the *Soryu*. PO1C Shigenori Nichikaichi flying from *Hiryu* crash-landed on Ni’ihau and was killed (see sidebar) while WO Ippei Goto and PO1C Tomio Inenaga from *Kaka* were listed as missing in action. Of the nine Zeros, eight fell to anti-aircraft fire while one was shot down by Lt. George S. Welch.

AC



Amongst the mistaken conclusions from the examination of AI-154 was that the Zero design could have been based on the Vultee P-66 Vanguard.



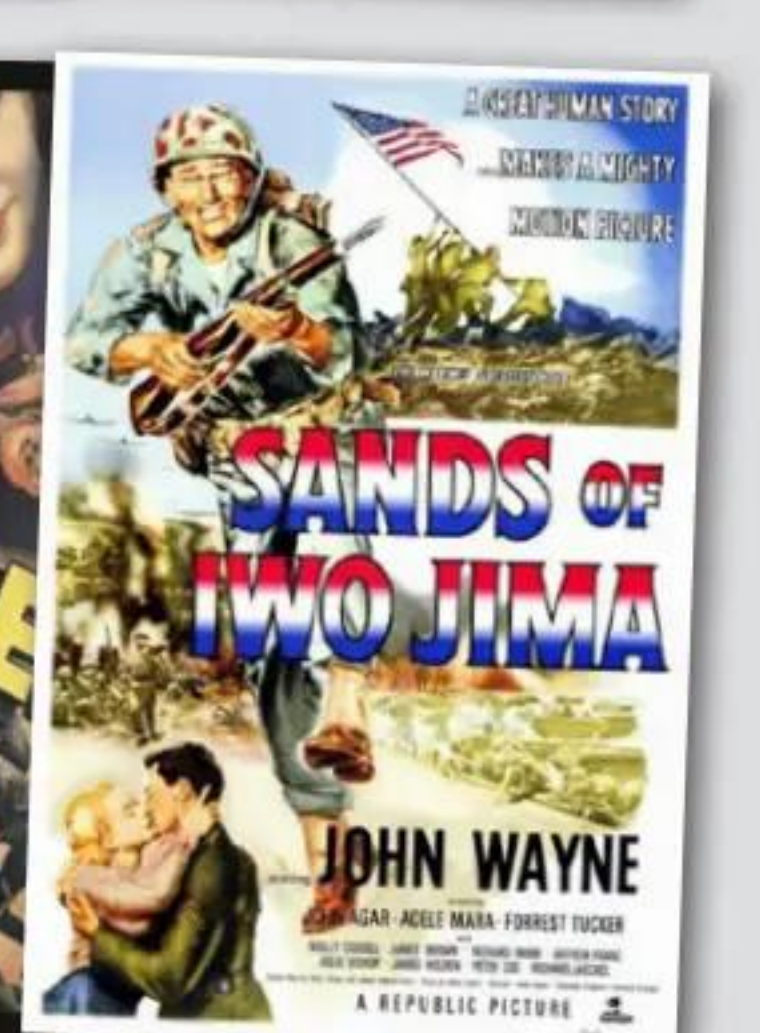
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AKUTAN ZERO

HOW THE US NAVY ENGAGED IN A RACE TO UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE FEARED ZERO

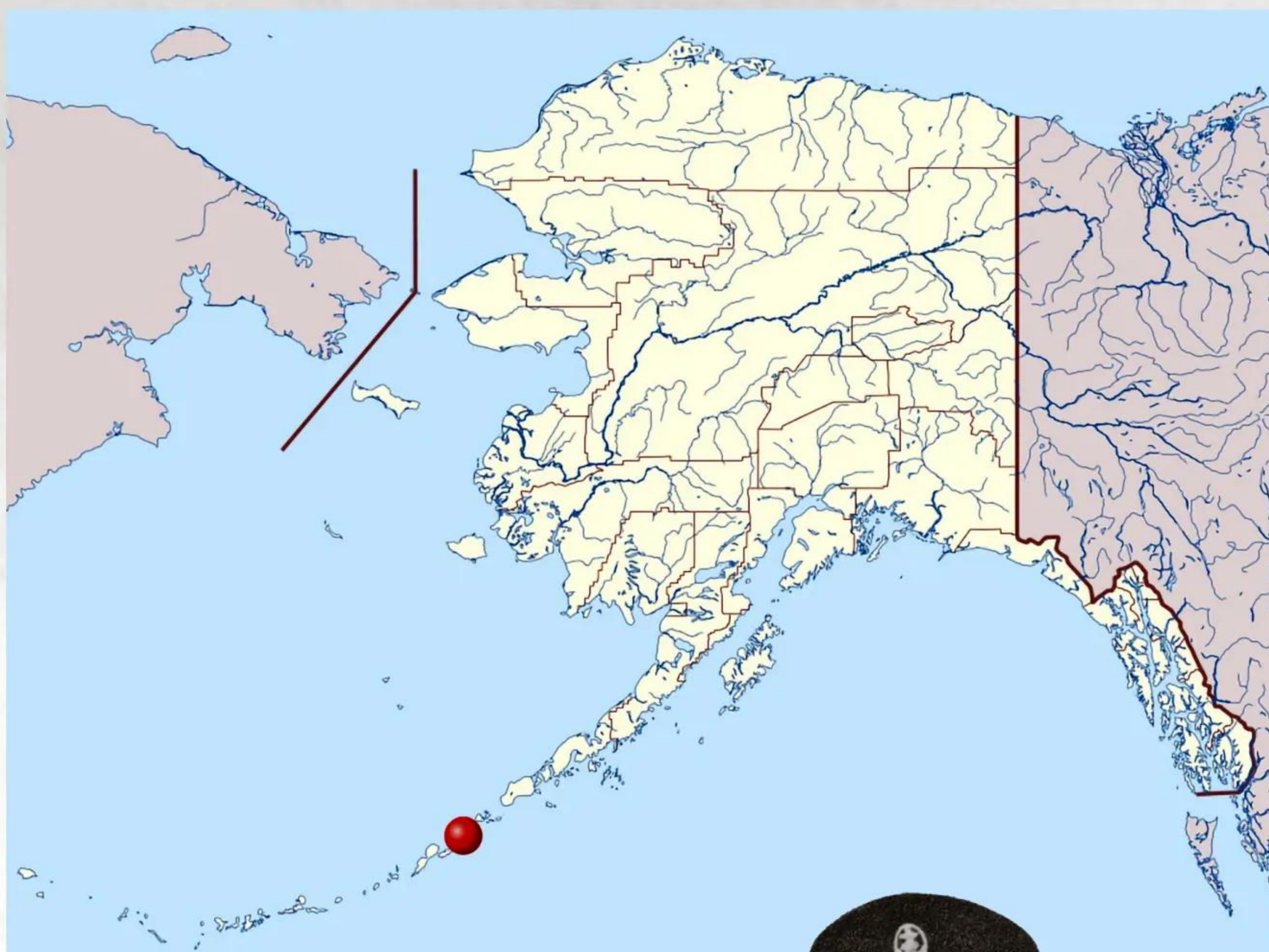
BY C.E. COLBY



The salvage crew notes what needs to be done to transport the Zero to Dutch Harbor. As can be seen, the plane was in an extremely remoted location and care had to be taken to not further damage the airframe.

The date was 4 June 1942 and the military forces of Japan seemed to be unbeatable. All across the Pacific, the Japanese were steamrolling over American and Allied defenses in a quest for total domination. On this date, a young (he was thought to be only 19-years-old) Japanese pilot named Tadayoshi Koga carefully strapped into the cockpit of his Zero fighter prior to attacking American targets in the remote Aleutian Islands. Little did he know that his flight would aid America in defeating Japan's plans for the destruction of the United States and its Allies in the Pacific.

Today, it may seem odd that an intense battle was being fought at the top of the world to gain a foothold in American occupied territory but there were a number of reasons for this. First, Japan was planning a massive strike to capture the small but vital island of Midway in the far reaches of the Pacific. Second, Japanese troops could gain bases in the Aleutians and then hop across the 120 islands that comprised the chain to invade Alaska and then work down into Canada and eventually the United States. The attack



The red circle denotes the remote location of the downed fighter.

on the Aleutians would draw battered American forces away from the Pacific (and Midway) to protect our national interests.

At Pearl Harbor, brave American pilots and anti-aircraft gunners accounted for 29 Imperial Japanese



Koga posing for a formal portrait.





This remarkable snap shot shows Koga's Zero pouring smoke from a severed oil line. As can be seen, the aircraft was not gaining altitude as the oil pressure dropped and oil temperature rose.



Lieutenant Bill Thies (left) and his Catalina crew spotted the downed Zero. Over a month had passed, and the enemy fighter could not be seen from the sea and was well off the normal air routes.



The first thing the Navy crew did was extensively photograph the plane.

Navy aircraft but only nine were Zeros and most of these were battered beyond recognition. Also, all nine pilots were killed. The wreckage was carefully gathered and examined but there was no way a flyable example could be created from the remains

America needed a fairly intact example so it could be flown and the findings incorporated into a new generation of USN/USAAF combat planes. Unwittingly, Koga would provide the very plane this country needed.

In order to spread out the limited American resources for the attack on Midway, the Japanese staged a relatively major operation in the Aleutians beginning in June 1942. Led by Adm. Kakuji Kakuta, the enemy task force blasted Dutch Harbor on Unalaska Island on 3 June and repeated the attack the following day.

Launching from the carrier *Ryujo* on 4 June, Koga was joined by Petty Officer Tsuguo Shikada and Chief Petty Officer Makota Endo to form a three-ship flight of Zeros attacking Dutch Harbor. It was recorded that three Zeros intercepted and shot down a US Navy Consolidated PBV-5A Catalina that was being flown by Bud Mitchell and his crew of six. Mitchell managed to get the heavily-damaged amphibian onto the water and he and his crew vacated the sinking craft. To illustrate the brutality of the enemy, Koga and the other two Zeros made repeated strafing passes on the helpless Americans until all were killed. The trio should be regarded as war criminals.

It then appears that the three Zeros returned to attack targets of opportunity. The 206th Coast Artillery Regiment was equipped with 3-inch and .50-caliber weapons and they opened up on the attacking aircraft. Even though all units had been on alert for possible Japanese attack, they were taken by surprise. On 3 June, bombs hit the barracks at Fort Mears, killing 17 men. After the initial attack, the 206th moved their weapons off the mountain tops that surrounded the harbor and placed them in new positions.

When the Japanese returned on 4 June, they destroyed the large fuel tanks located in the harbor and then peeled off to attack shipping. The pilots were instructed to aim for warships and



The location of the downed Zero had an almost other-worldly aspect.

they made runs on USS *Fillmore* and USS *Gillis* but by this time, the anti-aircraft fire was intense and accurate. The large transport SS *Northwestern* was mistaken for a warship but she had been previously beached so her powerplant could be used to provide steam and electricity for the installations ashore. Repeated attacks soon left the ship ablaze.

With their bloodlust aroused, the trio of fighters kept making more passes and that was a real mistake. Pulling up from a low strafing run, Koga's A6M2 (c/n 4593) was issuing a stream of dark smoke.

Over 40 years later, Shikada would publish an account of the attack. This recounting should be viewed as a fabrication at best and he denies that an attack was made on the PBV. However, he does state that strafing passes were made against two PBVs anchored in the bay. There was one problem with this — there were not PBVs in the bay on that particular day.

Also, as the years went by, numerous Americans would step forth and claim that they had hit Koga's Zero. A careful study of records and of the actual aircraft seem to indicate that the fighter was hit by .50-caliber fire along with bullets from smaller caliber weapons. It also appears that the strikes were made from above and below.

Pulling up and out, Koga was unable to gain much in the way of speed or altitude. In the cockpit, the oil pressure gauge was dropping as rapidly as the oil temperature gauge was rising. Pre-strike planning had designated that



The fuselage is raised up to retrieve the pilot's body.



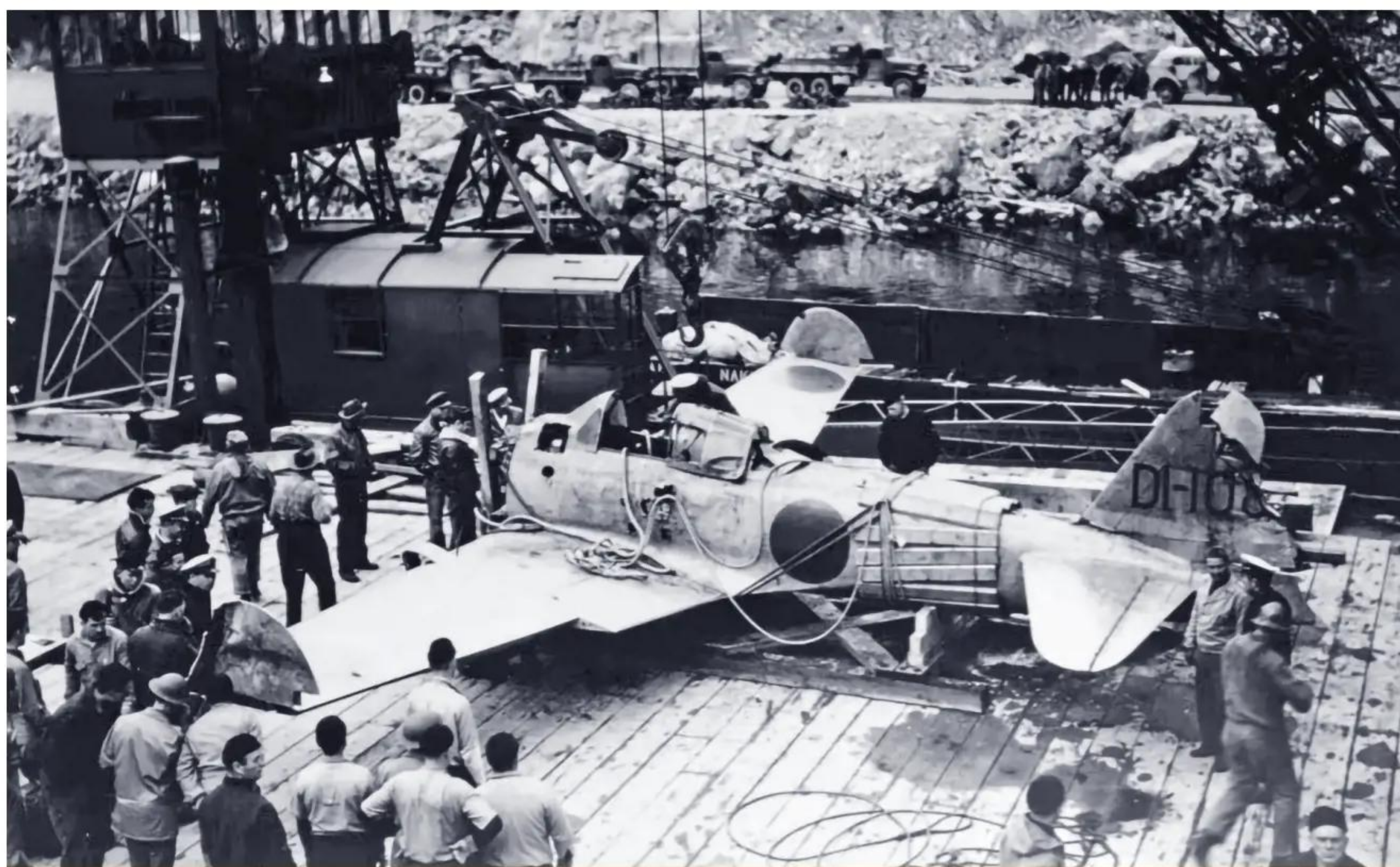
After the photos were taken, Koga's body was removed and tossed into a shallow depression.



The Navy crew begins the task of disassembling the fighter.



Everything to move the Zero had to be transported by boat and that was a very difficult task — compounded by the thick and clinging mud just under the grass surface.



Once the plane arrived at Dutch Harbor, it was flipped right-side up.

damaged aircraft should be flown to Akutan Island, about 25 miles east of Dutch Harbor. A Japanese sub would be waiting just off shore to pick up downed aviators.

Koga and his two wingmen made it to Akutan and he did a quick circle of the area. The ground appeared to be fairly flat and firm. The later presumption was a fatal mistake. A second pass showed that water was glinting just under the grass, indicating a quagmire. Shikada spotted this and attempted to warn Koga but he was now on final approach with gear and flaps down.

As he touched down, the Zero's high-pressure tires sliced through the grass covering and entered the mud below. This caused a complete stop of forward motion and the Zero flipped upside down and then skidded to a stop.

Circling above, the wingmen had been given implicit instructions to strafe and destroy any damaged Zero so it would not fall into American hands. The two pilots did not know what to do because they thought that Koga might be alive and trapped in the overturned fighter. Therefore, they did not strafe the craft but rather turned back to the carrier. The crew on the Japanese



The removed landing gear and wooden belly tank on the barge.



Trying to prevent further damage, the Zero is carefully raised from the barge.

submarine kept searching for Koga but without luck and it was finally driven off by the destroyer USS *Williamson*.

It appears that Koga died instantly when the Zero flipped — either his neck snapped or his head was struck with such force to cause deadly brain injury. As a point of interest, the American gunners did not realize they had achieved a victory and the designated landing area was very remote from the airways and could not be seen from the sea.

The valuable Zero would remain undiscovered for over a month. On 10 July 1942, Lt. William Theis and his PBY crew was patrolling the area in poor weather. They became lost but began picking up some identifiable points so they could return to Dutch

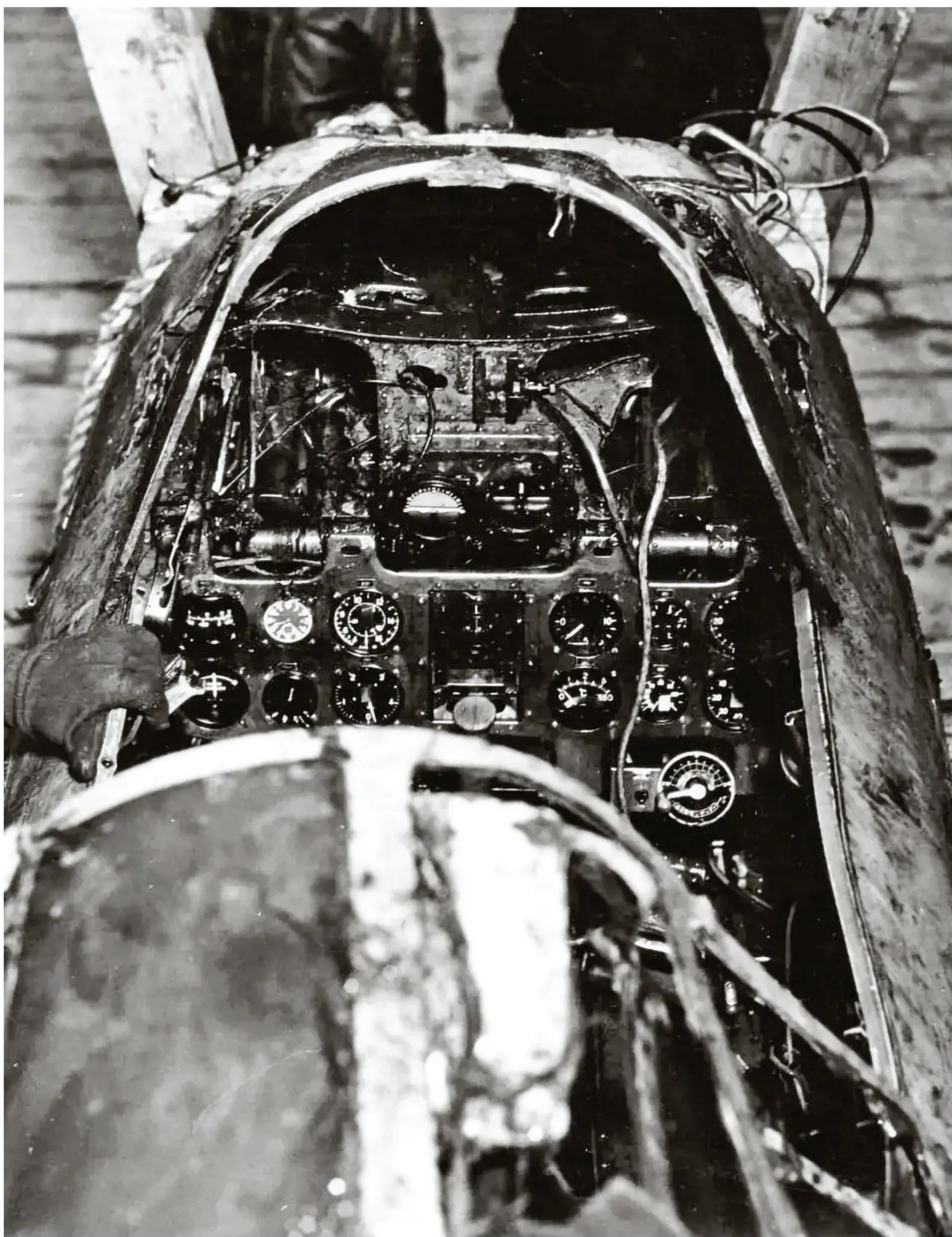
Harbor. Drawing out a new route, they flew directly over Akutan Island. Flying at low level to avoid poor weather, Machinist Mate Albert Knack, looking out a side window, was astounded to see the overturned Zero.

As soon as they returned to Dutch Harbor, the find was reported and Thies persuaded his commanding officer into letting him return with a salvage team. On 11 July, they headed back to the wreck and were accompanied by Arthur W. Bauman, a Navy photographer, who would create the historic images seen here.

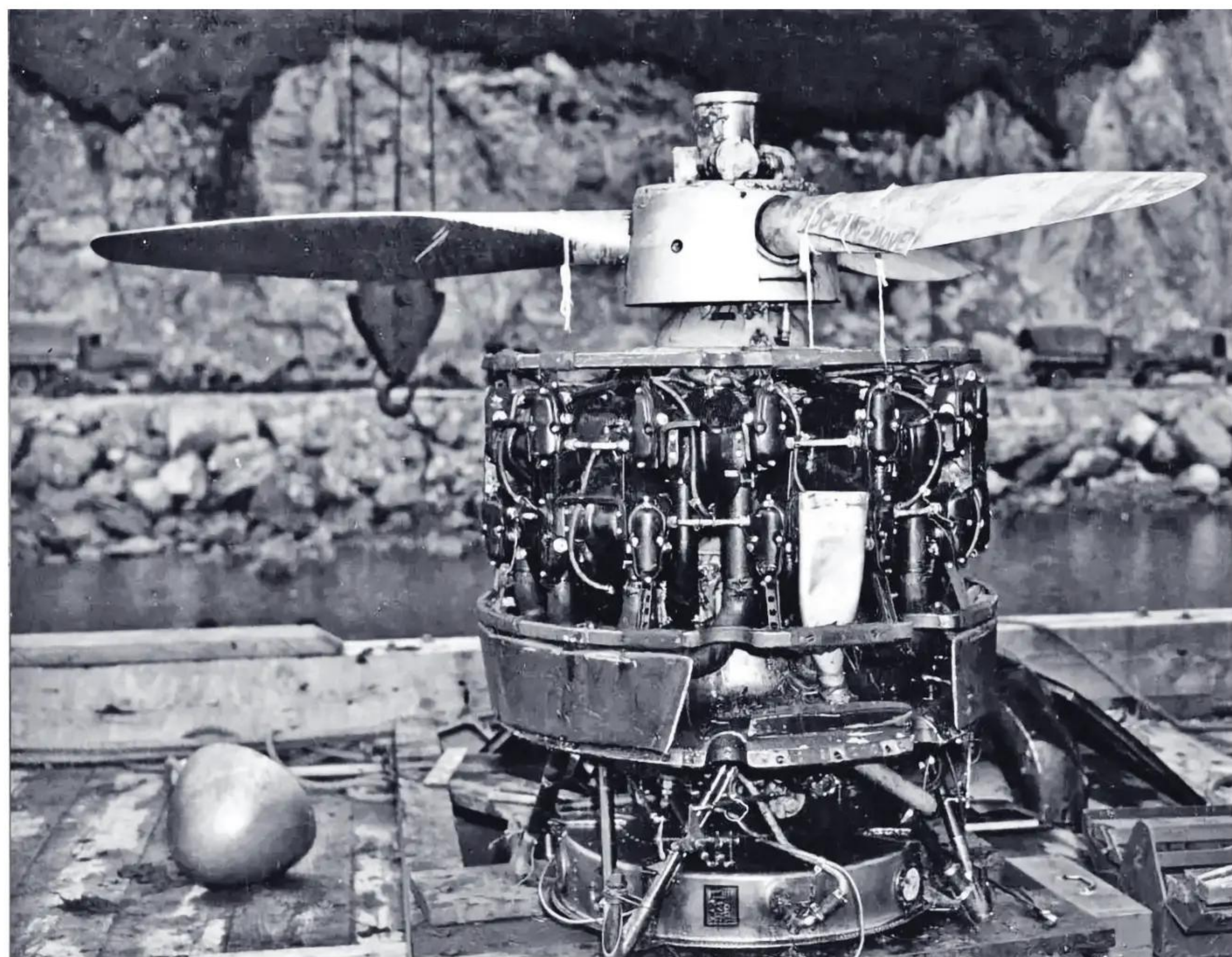
Sloshing through the mud, they reached the aircraft and began to give it a cursory examination. They could see Koga was still in the plane and,

using his razor-sharp survival knife, Knack — also the smallest member of the crew — managed to work himself into the fuselage and cut the pilot's harness. They then dragged Koga from the wreck and inspected his body for any valuable intelligence items. Once that was completed, they tossed him into a shallow depression near the aircraft.

On 12 July, a much better prepared salvage team landed near the Zero but attempting to disassemble and move the aircraft was proving to be a real nightmare. The vessel with the salvage equipment lost two anchors and began to drift before unloading could take place. On 15 July, now under direct orders to disassemble the plane and ship it to NAS North Island in the shortest



Cockpit of the Zero shortly after arriving at its destination.

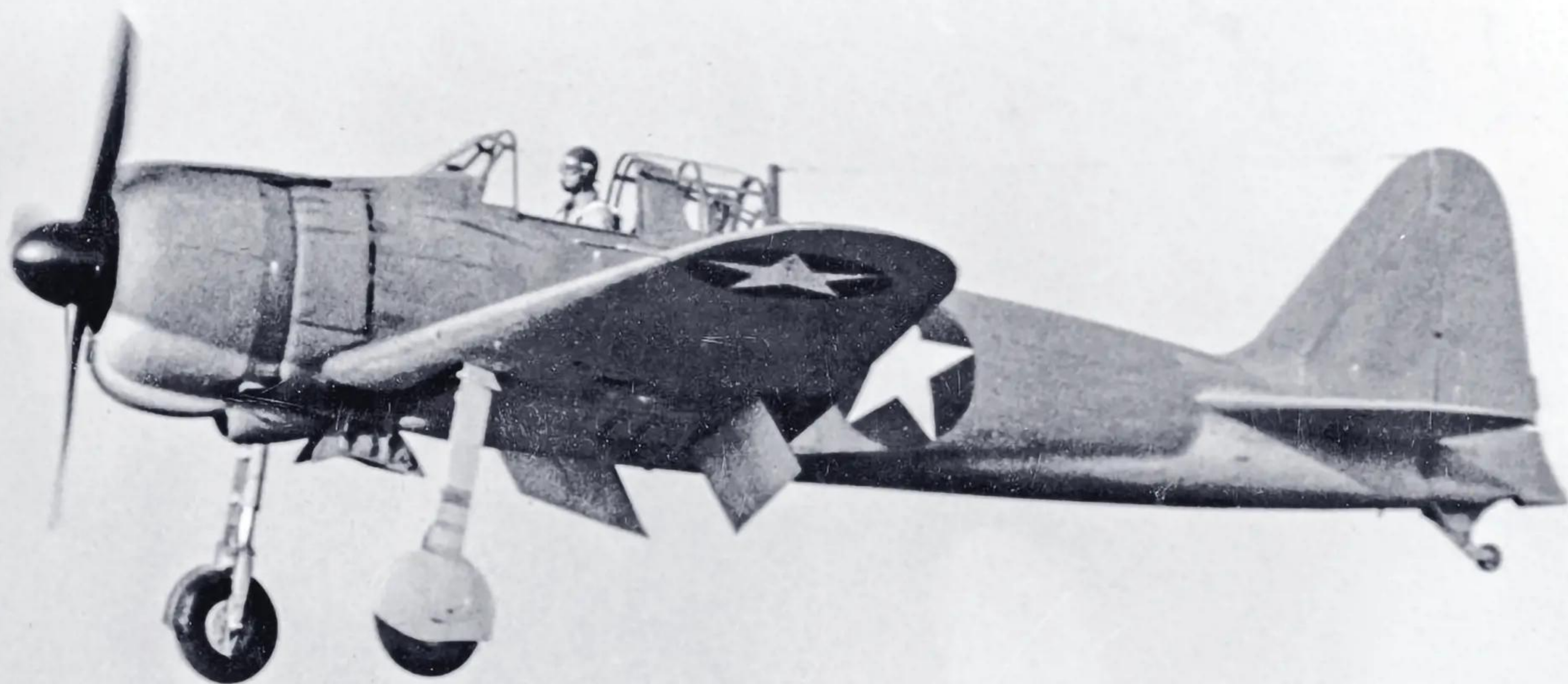


The removed engine and the relatively undamaged propeller.

time possible, more heavy equipment was brought in and the men managed to free the Zero from the mud, partially disassemble the plane, and then haul it overland (another step undertaken with great difficulty), until they could lift the fighter onto a barge and move it to Dutch Harbor. A Navy press release noted that at this time Koga was “given a Christian burial.” This might be propaganda because Koga was certainly not Christian and the Navy personnel now fully knew the savagery of the enemy.

Once at Dutch Harbor, the aircraft was turned right-side up and cleaned. Since speed was of the essence, the Zero was loaded onto the USS *St. Mihiel* which then then set sail for Seattle, where it arrived on 1 August. Loaded on a barge, it then headed for NAS North Island where skilled Navy mechanics went to work on the bent and battered airframe. The landing gear had been sheared off while the Sumitomo propeller was bent and dinged. Working non-stop (while the aircraft was kept under 24-hour guard), the Zero was pronounced ready to fly on 20 September — a remarkable achievement by the men of NAS North Island. The aircraft was given a US Navy camouflage scheme and Lt. Cmdr. Eddie Sanders took it aloft on that date. He would go on to undertake 24 test flights up to 15 October 1942 and part of his report reads:

“These flights covered performance tests such as we do on planes undergoing Navy tests. The very first flight exposed weaknesses of the Zero, which our pilots could exploit with proper tactics... immediately apparent was the fact that the ailerons froze at speeds above 200-knots so that rolling maneuvers at those speeds were slow and required much force on the control stick. It rolled to the left much easier than to the right. Also, its engine cut out under negative acceleration due to its float-type carburetor. We now had the answer for our pilots who were being outmaneuvered and unable to escape a pursuing Zero: Go into a vertical power dive, using negative acceleration, if possible, to open the range while the Zero’s engine was stopped by the acceleration. At about 200-knots, roll



With gear and flaps down, the rebuilt Zero comes in for its first landing.



Extensively test flown, the Zero also went to various aircraft builders for study. In this view it is with NACA Langley for testing and mounting in the Full-Scale Wind Tunnel.

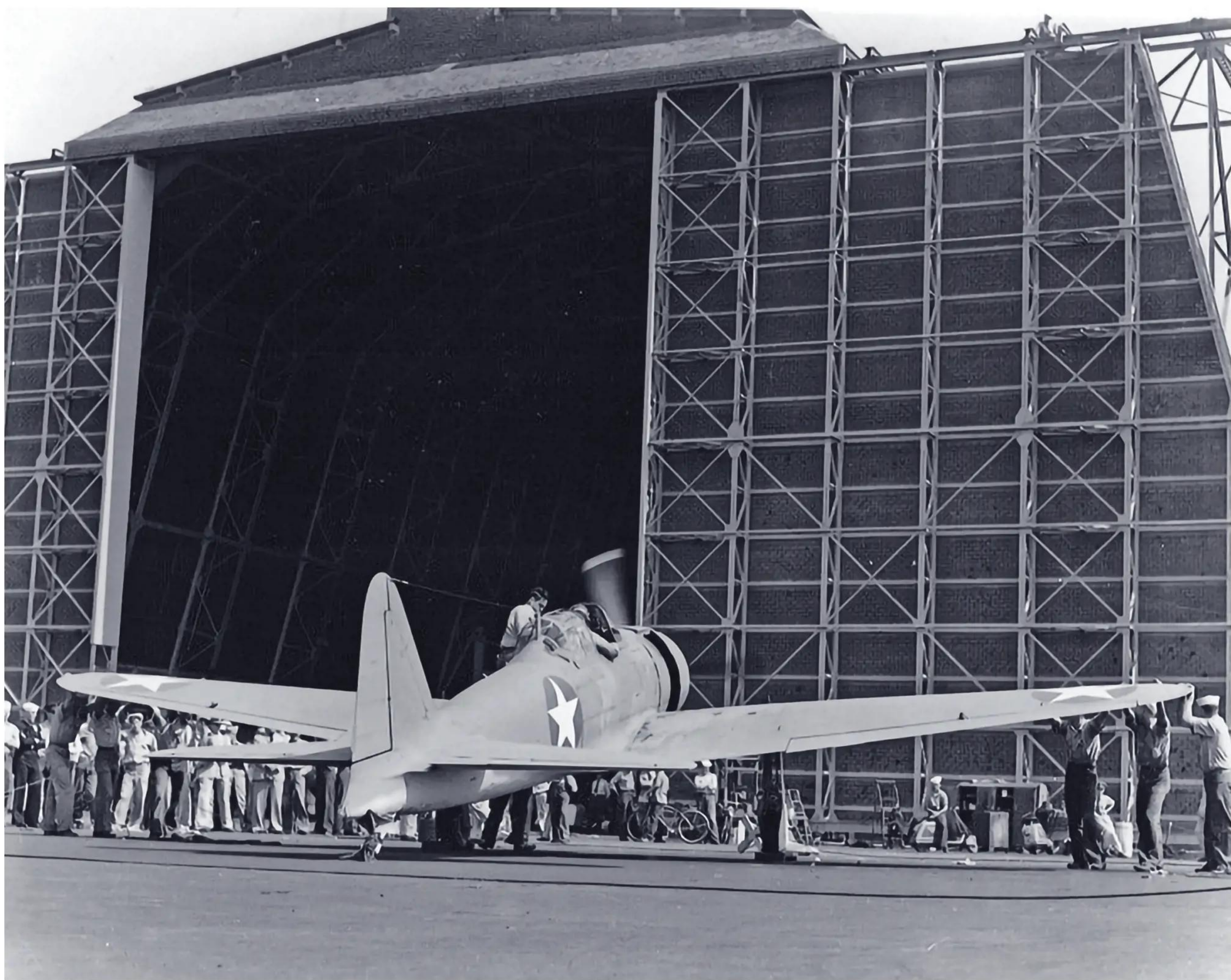
hard right before the Zero pilot could get his sights lined up."

From that point, the aircraft was extensively test flown at other bases and by manufacturers' test pilots. It also underwent aerodynamic tests in the Full-Scale Wind Tunnel at NACA Langley beginning 5 March 1943. After that, it went back to the Navy for more dogfighting tests with newer US Navy aircraft.

More recently, aviation historians have stated that many of the improvements on American aircraft were already underway, especially with the F6F-3 Hellcat. The aircraft was



Although there was a real rush to recover and fly a captured Zero, it would not be long until numerous wrecks and airframes were found on the battlefield. However, by then the secrets of the Zero had been revealed.



Once rebuilt by the Navy, the captured Zero proved to be a reliable flyer and tactics were developed on how to best engage the aircraft in combat.



A field full of Zeros and other Japanese aircraft at the end of the war. MacArthur had ordered all propellers be removed to thwart possible Japanese fanatics attempting attacks after the unconditional surrender. These planes had probably been held in reserve for suicide attacks against the American invasion fleet.

examined by Grumman and the first production F6F-3 made its first flight on 3 October 1942. The data from the captured Zero did not drastically influence the Hellcat's design but the information did impart significant knowledge on the Zero's handling characteristics. William Leonard, a test pilot and commander of several carrier groups, would later state, "The captured Zero was a treasure. To my knowledge, no other captured machine has ever unlocked so many secrets at a time when the need was so great."

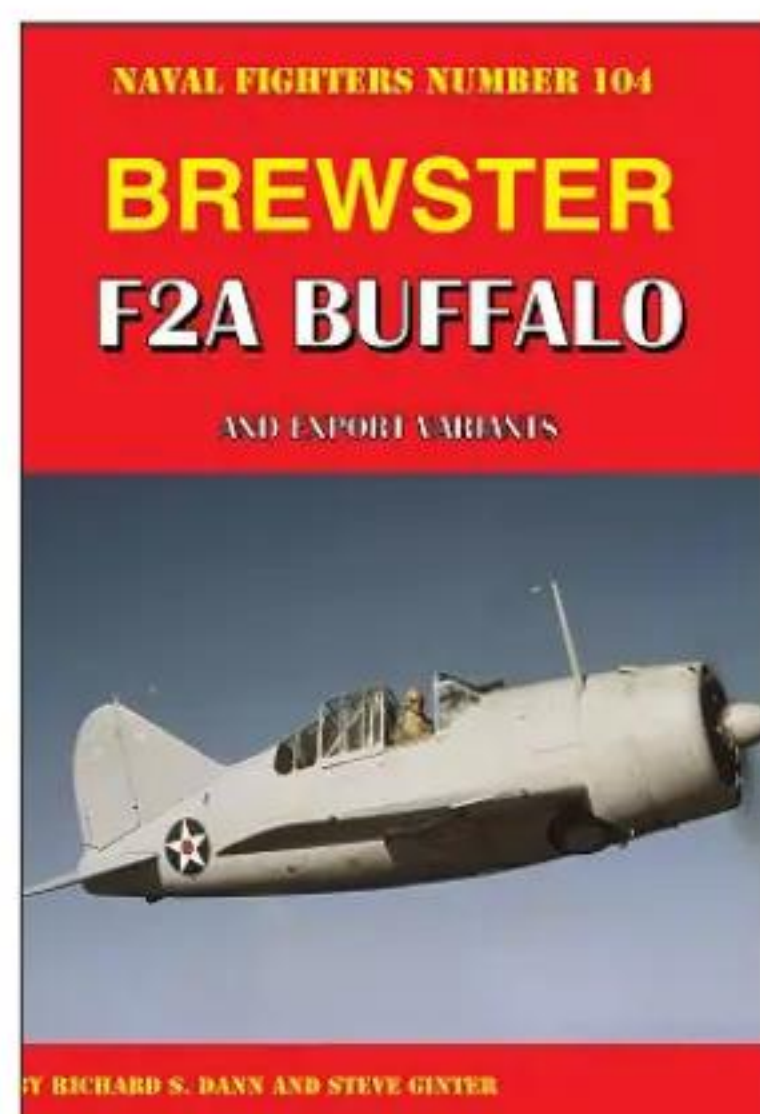
Koga's Zero kept on flying until February 1945. Taxiing for takeoff at NAS San Diego, the Zero was hit by a Curtiss SB2C Helldiver that had lost control on landing. The big prop on the Wright R-2600 engine sliced the Zero into sections and its flying days were over. The aircraft on which so much effort had been expended to recover and rebuild was ignominiously scrapped during February 1945.

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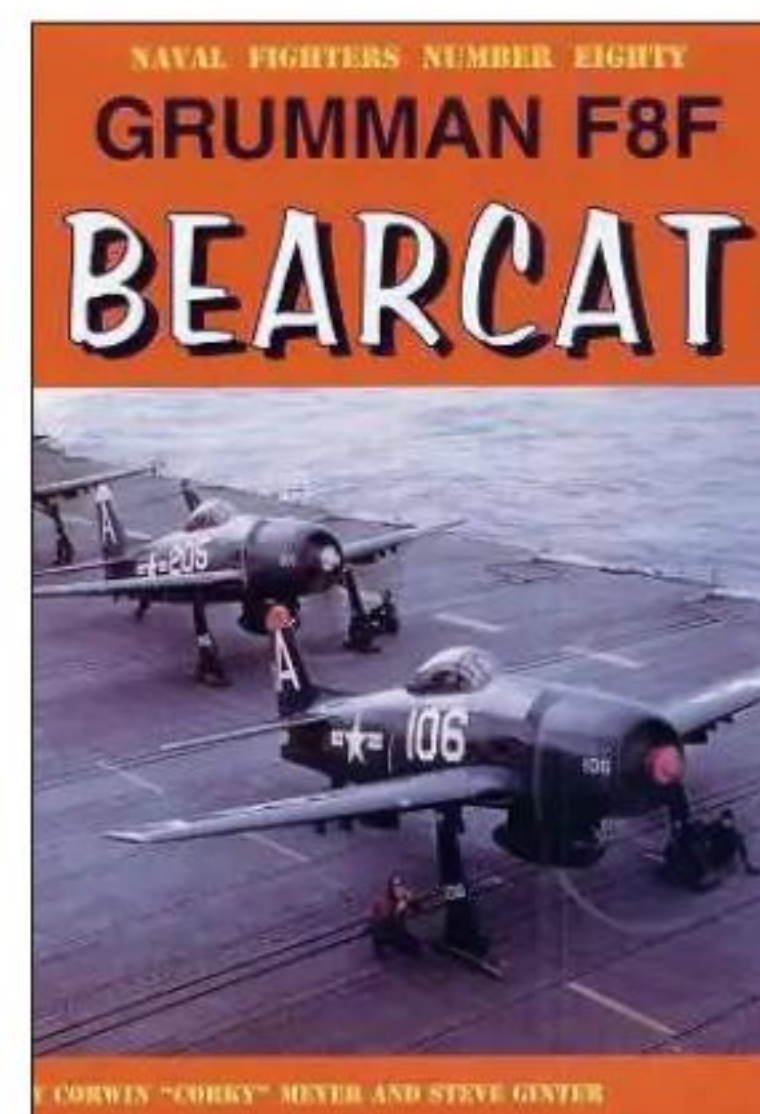
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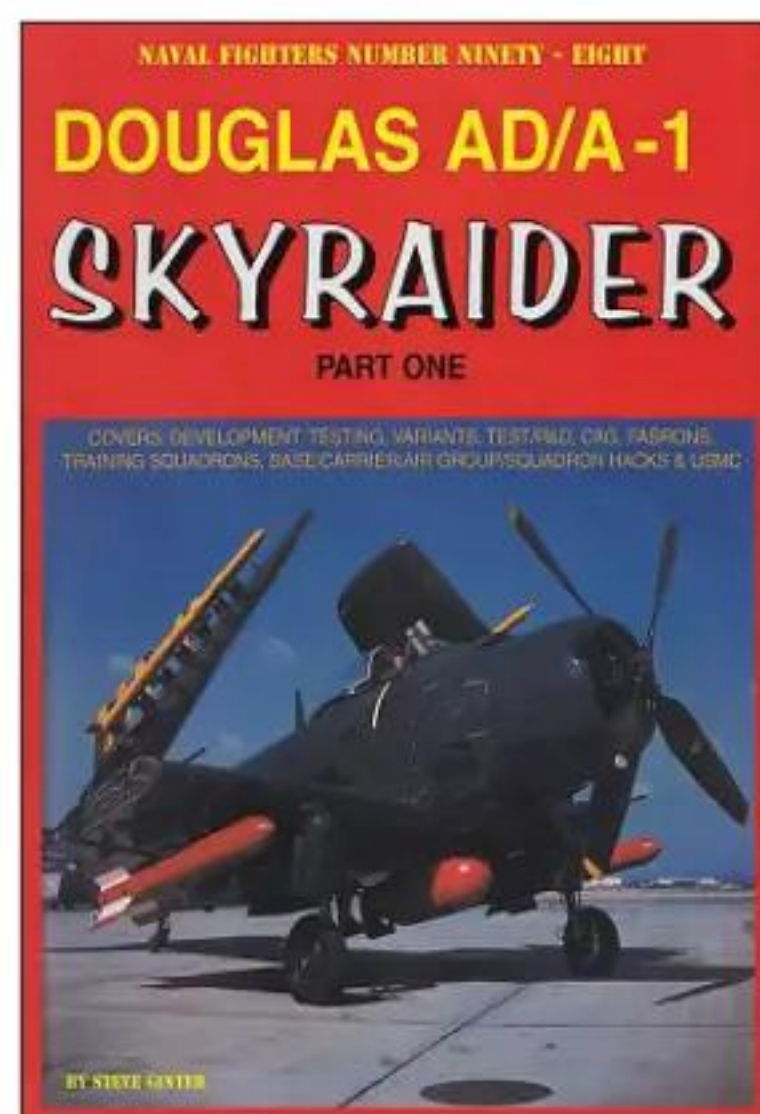
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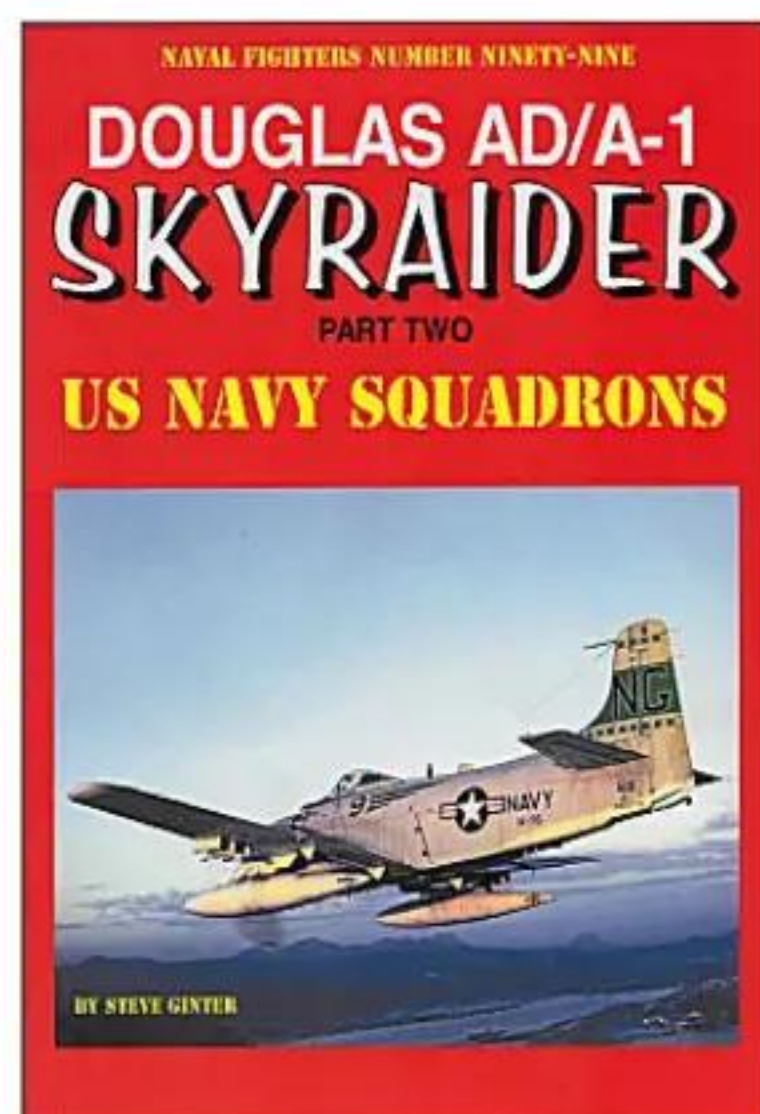
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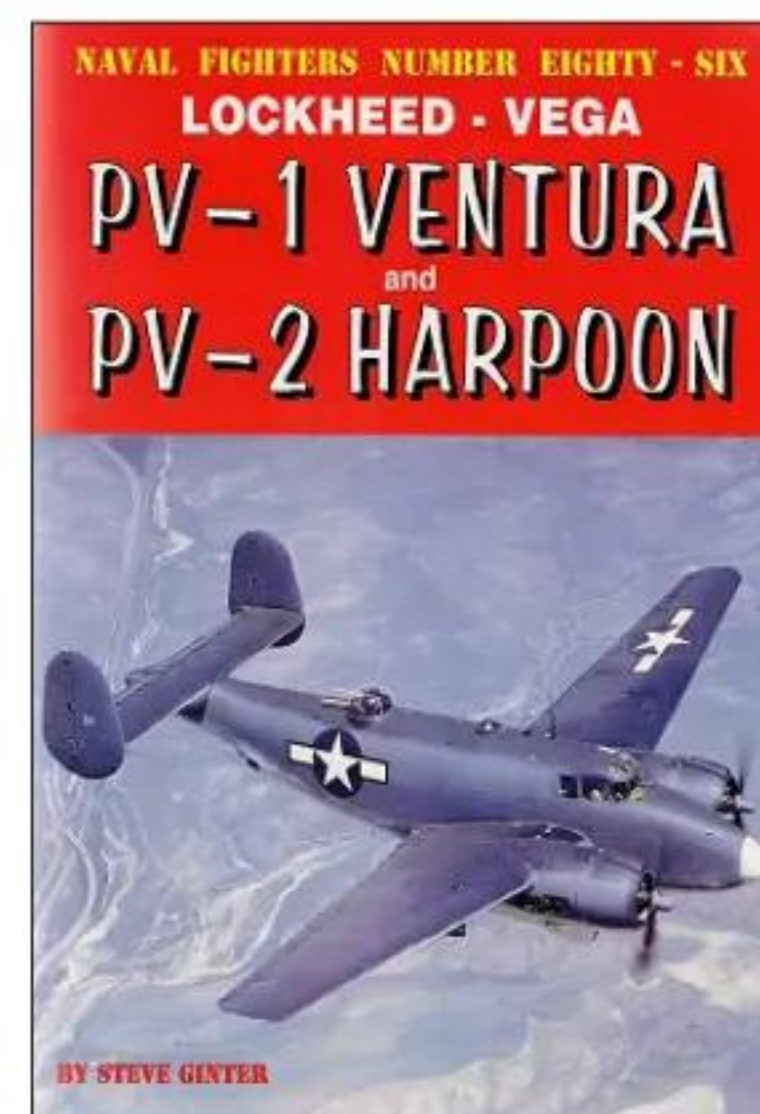
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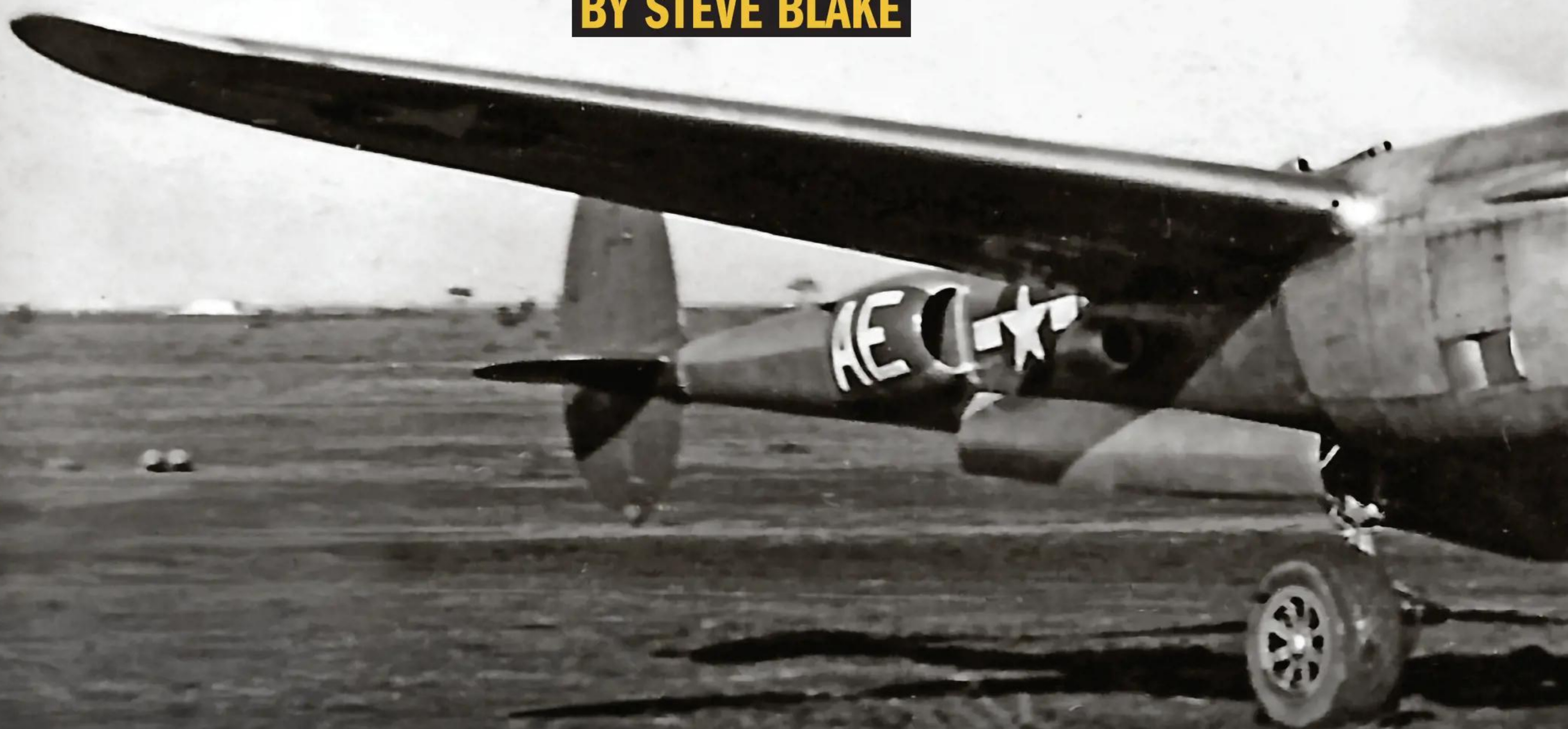
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AN UNUSUAL ENCOUNTER

A BATTLE BETWEEN USAAF LIGHTNINGS AND SOVIET YAKS
OFFERED A PREVIEW OF THE COMING COLD WAR

BY STEVE BLAKE



Given the antipathy between the capitalist/democratic USA and the socialist/autocratic USSR, it must have been quite a shock for many Americans to suddenly find, as of December 1941, that their country was a combatant ally of Russia. The US officially declared war on Nazi Germany's ally the Empire of Japan on 8 December, the day after the latter's surprise attack on its Territory of Hawaii, and Germany declared war on the US three days later. Russia had then been at war with the Nazis for six months, following Germany's (and its European allies') attack on *their* country.

Until well into 1944, there was little

aerial contact between American and Russian warplanes in a combat theater. The situation began to change that spring when the USSR agreed to make three of its airfields located in Ukraine available for temporary use by units of the USAAF's strategic 8th and 15th Air Forces (AF) in England and Italy. Code-named Operation *Frantic*, this plan allowed American bombers and fighters to attack targets in eastern Europe far beyond their usual range and then recover at those Russian airfields, from which they would fly additional missions before returning to their home bases. (The Soviet Air Force had little long-range strategic capability.)

The US and the USSR were only temporary, convenient allies, joined together in their unnatural and uncomfortable alliance due to the shared enmity with their then more dangerous opponent Germany. Suspicion and distrust often influenced their relationship in the conduct of the war. At the Ukrainian bases, the Russians were very wary and controlling of the comings and goings of the USAAF planes (the paranoid Stalinist attitude nearly placed Americans in the same category as Nazis). This resulted in some uncomfortable and unfortunate incidents, the most serious of which took place on 26 June 1944. Lieutenant David K. Rowe, a Lockheed

The 95th Fighter Squadron's P-38 coded AE ("A" for the 95th and "E" for that plane within the squadron) was assigned to Capt. Coffelt, who most likely flew it on the 7 November mission.



Lieutenant William A. "Bill" Stakem led the sixth 95th Fighter Squadron flight on the 7 November mission. He destroyed (burned) one of the Soviet trucks in the convoy near Niš.



Lieutenant Tom Urton, leader of the 95th Squadron's fifth flight, was credited with probably destroying one of the Yaks and damaging another.



The 95th Fighter Squadron's Lt. John Blumer in a relaxed moment at Vincenzo. After strafing two Russian trucks and a train near Niš, which actions resulted in the immediate intervention of the Soviet Air Force Yak units based nearby, Blumer shot down one of the latter's planes.



F-5 photo recon pilot of the 8th AF's 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group, flew a solo mission to Poland that day and was returning to his temporary Ukrainian base at Poltava, when he was shot down by a Russian fighter, whose pilot, despite the Lightning's distinctive profile, evidently assumed he was German, *Luftwaffe* aircraft having been reported in the area. Rowe was fortunately able to bail out and parachute to earth safely, while suffering from painful burns (after spending some time in a Russian hospital, he was evacuated to the US for further treatment). Ironically, the fighter that shot him down was an American Bell P-39 Airacobra, hundreds of which had been supplied to Russia under the Lend-Lease Act.

By November 1944, the German *Reich*

was disintegrating, assailed by the Allies from both the west and east. American, British, and Free French forces had invaded Normandy in June and southern France in August, and had mostly liberated that country from its German occupation. The Western Allies were then entrenched along the German border in the Low Countries and France, preparing for their move into Germany itself. In the east, the Soviets had pushed the Axis forces out of most of the Russian territory they had captured earlier in the war. The British had invaded German-occupied Greece in October, and the Nazi forces there were retreating north into Yugoslavia. East of the latter country, Germany's allies Bulgaria and Romania had fallen to the Russians, while to the north its other ally Hunga-

ry was in the process of being invaded by them. The Germans were also being forced out of Yugoslavia, by the Russians and by several Yugoslav partisan armies that were being supported and supplied by the Western Allies in Italy, mainly from the air. The whole German southeastern front was collapsing.

As part of its support of the Russian and Yugoslav armies' ground campaign there, which had been ongoing for the past three months, the 15th AF attacked targets throughout Yugoslavia on 7 November 1944. The 82nd Fighter Group (FG) was, according to its official mission report, assigned the task of strafing "M/T [motor transport] on roads from Sjenica to Novi Pazar, to Raška, to Mitrovica" in the southeastern part of the country. This

7 NOV	COL	LTR	CHALL	POINT	MAG COURSE	MILES
07 - 13	RG	J	I	A S-JENICA	63	265
13 - 19	Y-YR	D	B	B NOVI PAZAR	114	30
CHAN	B			C RASKA	25	10
TAKE OFF	0830			D MITROVICA	335	30
O C	0900			E	253	295
TARGET TIME	1030					

Recall — Ashtray

This is the “flimsy” (a special, temporary document printed on a very thin, carbon-like sheet of paper) that was carried on the 7 November mission by 95th Squadron Operations Officer Capt. Oscar T. “Ted” Coffelt Jr. (his middle name was Theodore). Flimsies contained pertinent mission info for the pilots’ use — especially navigational. While strafing that day, Coffelt destroyed what he *thought* was a “six-wheel German truck full of troops.”



Some of the Lightning pilots mistook the Yaks for Spitfires.



A P-51B Mustang captured by the Germans and operated by the Luftwaffe.

was the Group’s 829th mission of the war, its first having been in North Africa in late December 1942. It had been based at Vincenzo (Foggia #11 — part of that vast sprawl of airfields located on the flat terrain), in the Tavoliere Plain near the city of Foggia and the east-central Italian coast, for the past

ten months.

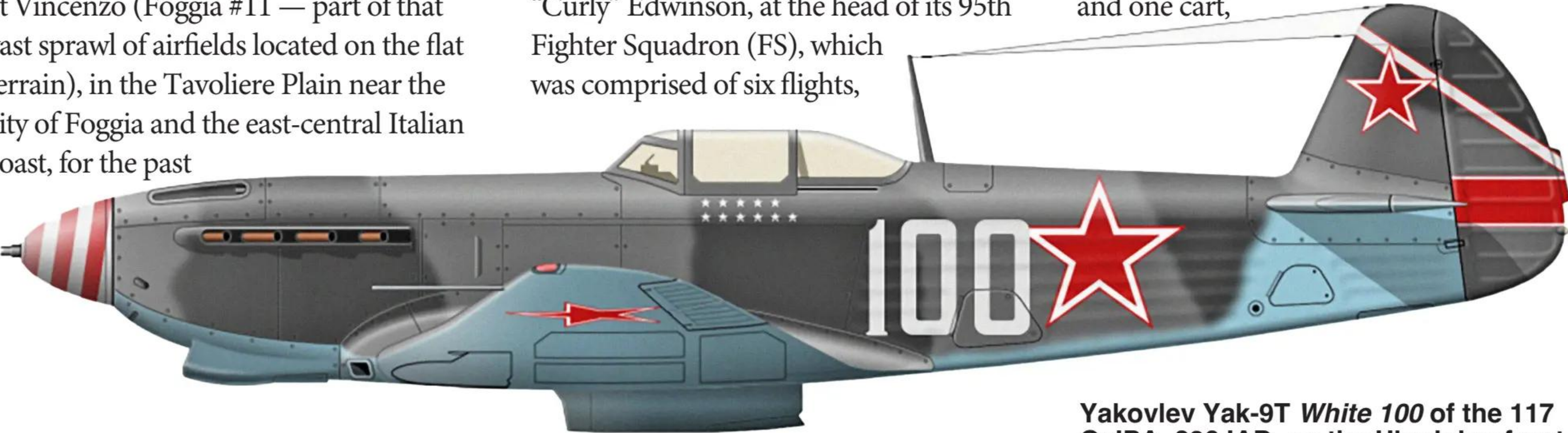
The 82nd was led on this mission by its CO, 32-year-old Col. Clarence T. “Curly” Edwinson, at the head of its 95th Fighter Squadron (FS), which was comprised of six flights,

whereas its other two squadrons, the 96th and 97th, were made up of the usual four flights. Edwinson, for whom this was his 28th mission with the Group, had assumed its command at the end of August. Sixty of its P-38s had taken off from the Vincenzo airfield by 0900 hours; they then formed up over the nearby Adriatic Sea and proceeded over it 150 miles northeast to Yugoslavia. Two of them returned early. According to the mission report:

“95th led with 97th on the left and 96th on right on route out at 12,000 feet. 96th started down at Bijelo Polje and strafed on deck along road between Sjenica to Novi Pazar. 95th and 97th continued at 12,000 feet to a point 15 miles north of Raška where 95th spiraled down towards the deck. On the way down a locomotive was seen near Maglic. It was destroyed by 95th. They then strafed M/T along road between Maglic, Raška, Mitrovica and Pristina. Mitrovica and Pristina were not definitely identified by all pilots as 95th was attacked between these points by fighters later identified as Russian. 97th flew top cover at 14,000 feet and one flight of the 95th stayed up and did not strafe.”

Those pilots were right to not identify Mitrovica and Pristina, as the 95th and 97th Squadrons had over-run their target area. The 95th actually made its attacks about 50 miles northeast of where its pilots *thought* they were — the last of them from Aleksinac 20 miles south to Niš shortly before one o’clock. The mountains and valleys of Yugoslavia all look very similar, and a navigational error had created what was to become a serious international incident between supposed allies.

The 82nd FG mission report states that the P-38s’ strafing resulted in the destruction of three oil trucks, 28 trucks, four staff cars, one warehouse, two locomotives, and one cart,



Yakovlev Yak-9T White 100 of the 117 GvIPA, 236 IAD, on the Ukrainian front.

Yak-9T White 48 flown by Alexey Mashenkin of 812IAP, 365IAD.



plus damage to 22 trucks, 25 railroad cars, and a radio station. As also noted in the report, one of the 95th flights stayed above with the 97th to provide cover as the rest of the Squadron strafed the ground targets. It was Col. Edwinston who destroyed the first locomotive, and much additional damage was inflicted as they continued south, where they attacked what turned out to be a Russian road convoy near Niš. The mission report continues:

“As the P-38s were pulling up from the deck, the top cover reported that S/E A/C [single-engine aircraft] were taking off from a field immediately in front of them. As the leading P-38s peeled up and away, a Yak pulled his nose up immediately after takeoff and shot one P-38 down. It is thought that this was [2nd] Lt. [Philip] Brewer [flying P-38L-1-LO 44-24035, named My Fantasy]. One Yak crossed below [1st] Lt. [Thomas A.] Urton [leader of the 95th’s cover flight] and broke into him, and a general dogfight started in which four P-38s and six Yaks were engaged. Lt. Urton recognized one of the planes he was shooting at as a Yak and called to his flight that they were friendly. Just then someone called to Lt. Urton to break and he looked back to see a Yak on his tail, shooting at him at close range. [His squadron mate] Lt. [John E.] Blumer shot this Yak down in flames. The other Yaks continued to press the attack and a second one was hit and went down smoking. A third was hit [by Lt. Urton] while on a P-38’s tail and left the fight. [The 95th’s 2nd] Lt. [Eldon E.] Coulson [flying P-38J-15-LO 43-28662] was last seen in this fight and was probably one of the P-38s seen to crash and burn by each pilot in the fight. This dogfight finally separated, and when Lt. Urton wagged his wings the Yaks did the same and allowed the P-38s to withdraw.

“Col. Edwinston’s flight pulled up near the A/D [airdrome] and saw three S/E fighters taking off. At the same time one at

about 2000 feet made a head-on pass at them, firing. The P-38s broke into him and after two or three passes Lt. [William E.] Blurock got on his tail and saw hits. This plane’s wheels dropped part way down and he started pouring smoke.”

The Group’s Daily Operations Report added to the narrative:

“After this fight was over a S/E that appeared to be a Spit [Spitfire] 9 [Mk. IX] gave the wings signals from a distance and was answered by Col. Edwinston. [The 97th FS’ 2nd] Lt. [Kenneth H.] Katschke was flying at 7000 feet as part of top cover when he saw a S/E A/C take off from the L/G [landing ground] and then pull up and shoot a P-38 down in flames as the P-38 was peeling up. Lt. Katschke was unable to identify the plane but supposed it was an



Captain Coffelt with Lightning AE.



The 97th Fighter Squadron’s Lt. George Marvin taxis his assigned P-38L-1-LO 44-24612, coded C9 and named *Paddy*, prior to another flight. Although it isn’t known for certain, they too may have flown the 7 November mission.



Yak-9T White 38 of 728IAP during late 1944.

enemy and dived on it and shot it down at from 3000 to 4000 feet. He saw the red star on the A/C as it spun in and crashed.”

The “Spit 9” was actually a Russian Yakovlev Yak-9, which did resemble the

Spitfire. In fact, Royal Air Force Spitfires were flying missions over Yugoslavia from Italy, though not at that distance. The Soviet Air Force also operat-

ed some Spitfires with which England had supplied it, but these weren’t them.

John Blumer recorded his recollections of this memorable mission decades later:

“The German high command had come to the conclusion that they could no longer hold Greece. They had decided to pull all their troops and materiel up out of Greece and put them into the Battle of Europe. Since Yugoslavia is essentially one low range of mountains after another, all oriented in the northwesterly/southeasterly direction, that meant that they would be travelling through those valleys heading up towards Europe. Our mission was to strafe those columns of retreating Germans.

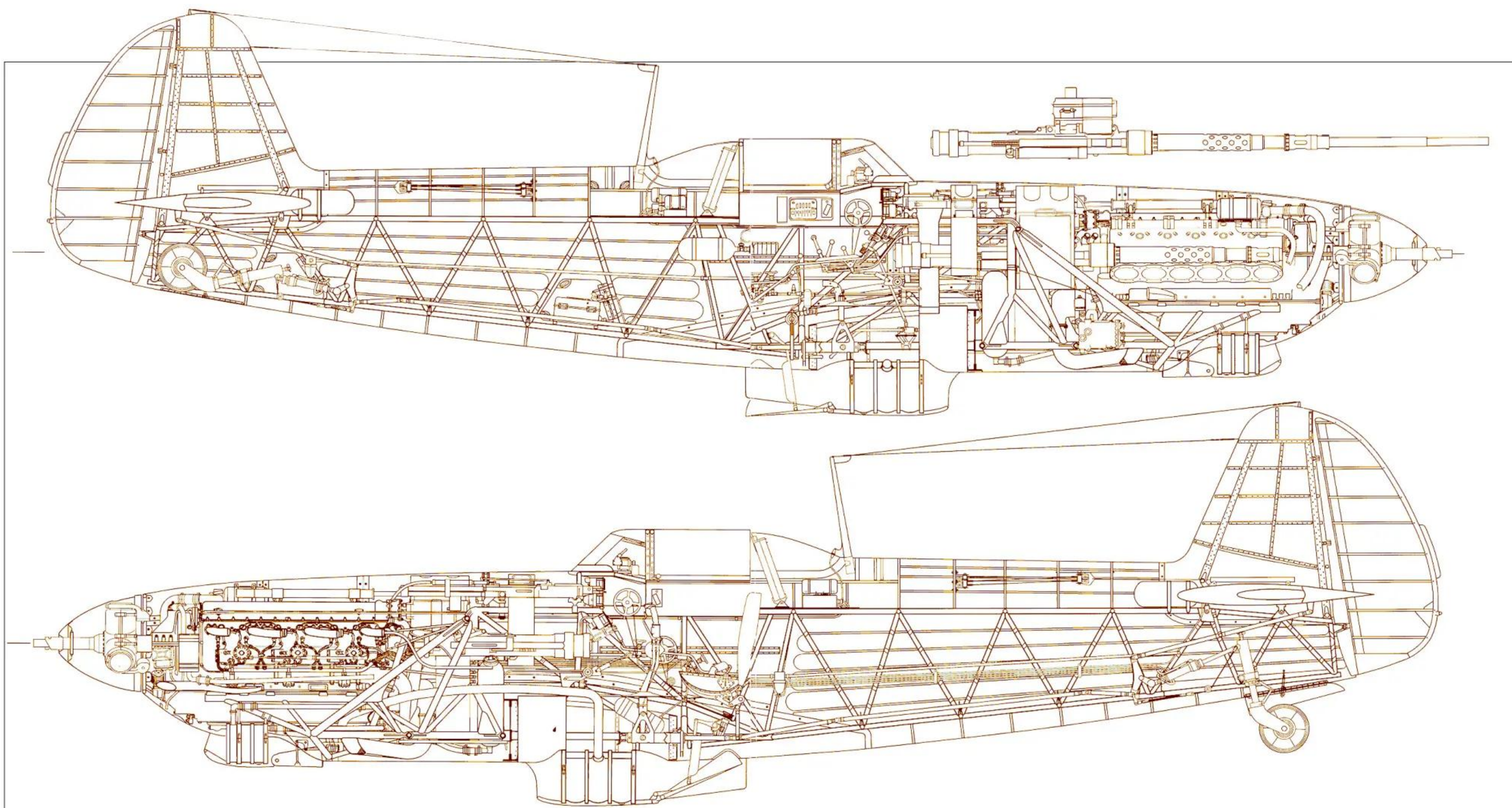
“I recall the first impression I had was ‘My God!’ All the stuff we had to shoot at [the roads and railroad tracks were crawling with rolling stock, everything moving] should have tipped us off — should have been a signal to us that something was wrong, because the Germans were pretty cagey about moving by daylight. At that stage our air superiority was well established and they did most of their moving at night; in the daytime they had that stuff hidden and covered up. But, like I said, there was just stuff moving everywhere and so we went to work on it. The first mental picture I have is of taking a shot at a truck that was sitting on a flatcar on a railroad track [I don’t even recall if I hit it] and continuing in an easterly direction and then swinging around to the north around a hill. Then as I came around the hill there was a road that was exposed right in front of me, and almost right in my sights dead ahead of me was a



Konstantin I. Golberg with a Yak-9T of 265IAP, 336IAP, showing the business end of the 37mm cannon.



Pilots of the 97th FS sometime in the latter part of 1944, in one of the jeeps that transported them to their planes on the flightline before and after their missions.



Structural views of the Yak-9T showing the simple but sturdy construction of the type along with the 37mm cannon.

truck packed with troops just like sardines, shoulder to shoulder. I just dropped the nose and let drive into the truck, and I recall that I was surprised at how long it took them to react. I kind of expected to see them flying out of that truck in every direction as soon as the first few rounds hit, but it took them awhile to realize that they were being strafed, and they just kind of stood there and let it happen. It wasn't until several seconds had elapsed that they actually started to jump out of the truck and head for the ditches.

"The next picture I have is of swinging around in a southwesterly direction and all of a sudden off to my right, which would have due west from me, there was a P-38 spinning down in flames, burning in a flat spin, the right engine just a blow torch. The next thing I knew I looked up and there was what I recall almost looked like a flock of sparrows, probably 20 or 25 single-engine fighters of some kind directly overhead a couple of thousand feet. And immediately some confusion there, because they didn't look like any German fighter that I knew. I didn't know what they were, but, obviously, they were shooting at us.

"Then our formation kind of broke up and there were several individual dogfights going on in the area, and I noticed that there was a P-38 probably 30° off of my nose to the left. At that time, I was pointed in a southwesterly direction and it was

down close to the ground, wrapped up in a hard right turn with one of the unknown bogies on his tail and shooting. The nose of this unknown was just a ball of fire from his guns. From my position above and behind the bogie I was in perfect position. The range was a little bit long — probably about 400 yards — but it was still in real good gun range, and all I had to do was drop the nose and he was in my sights, and I let him have a burst. I saw bullet strikes and he rolled over to the left, kind of half inverted, and the flames broke out from under the engine cowl. I didn't visually follow him down, but a few seconds later I glanced over in that direction and saw a lot of smoke and fire where he had hit the ground. Then the P-38 that had been shot at started climbing up and heading off to the west, apparently trying to rejoin the main formation, which was already partially reformed and heading



Captain Aleksandr Ivanovich Koldunov in an official photo displaying his many medals, including two honoring him as a Hero of the Soviet Union. With 46 individual victories plus one shared, Koldunov was the sixth-ranked Russian ace and the second-ranked Yak ace.



Soviet pilots from 402IAP, 265IAD, with a Yak-9T.



Operation *Frantic* was an uneasy alliance between the Americans and Soviets. The Germans fully understood the importance of these shuttle raids and a destroyed B-17G of the 96th Bomb Group is seen at Poltava after a German attack.



An F-5 Lightning of the 7th Photo Group similar to that flown by Lt. David K. Rowe was shot down by the Soviets on 26 June 1944.



Rowe's unarmed photo recon Lightning was destroyed by a Soviet Airacobra.

for home. So, I just pulled up, kind of in a line-abreast position off to his right so that we were both protected. We could protect each other from anybody attacking from the rear and just proceed to catch up to the formation, join it, and head for home.

"The whole affair probably didn't last five minutes. Oh, one more thing that happened: After I joined the formation and we were actually on course for home, one of the bogies came up from behind us and was wagging his wings in some sort of recognition signal. I still didn't tumble that he was a Russian. I wasn't close enough to any

of them to see any markings on the airplanes, and I hadn't noticed any markings on the trucks, although they were all marked with Russian insignia. This unknown bogie coming up from behind that way almost triggered the impulse to break into him and take a shot at him, because he was coming up behind and would have been in a nice position to shoot somebody. But his peculiar acting, rocking his wings and so on, kind of made me hold off. I recall glancing at the ground as we left and noticing several fires that were obviously burning airplanes, but I didn't actually count them. There must have

been close to half a dozen fires altogether of airplanes burning, both ours and theirs."

Blumer's squadron mate Lt. George A. Bowers Jr. also remembered this mission:

"Upon arriving at our ETA [estimated time of arrival] we were over an empty valley. Radio silence was broken and the leader of the 96th asked permission to check it out. He was given permission. The rest of us continued on course for another 10 to 15 minutes, at which time we came upon another valley — this one full of troop convoys, trains, etc. [Map-wise, these valleys looked alike.]

"The first section [two flights], led by Col. Edwinson, went down to strafe. We of the second section circled at 5000 feet. The conversation from the ships strafing grew louder and more frequent, such as: 'Who are these troops?' and 'I just shot up a Ford V-8!' The colonel said, 'Shut up, get off the air.' Then, 'We're being jumped by Fw 190s. No, Me 109s. No, Spitfires.' Then, 'Yaks! I've got one in my sights; what do I do?'

"In the meantime, we of the second section dove down. I saw a P-38 burning, then lost my [element and flight] leader on his first turn. My [auxiliary fuel] tanks hadn't dropped off and I didn't know it. Thus, I couldn't turn as sharply as he did. I got on the tail of a little black ship, shot a short burst, had hits, shot again, had more hits. For some reason I then looked in my rear-view mirror. I had one on my tail! I broke right, lost him, saw another black ship as I passed over a burning P-38, got on his



Even though USAAF pilots were constantly subjected to identification quizzes through the use of posters and other visual aids, the identification of aircraft was poor at best.

Yakovlev Yak-9T White 66 of 149GvIAP, 294IAD, on the Ukrainian Front.



tail, shot again, again hits. I gave more power to get closer. We were on the deck. He took me over his landing field, and as I went across there was an anti-aircraft explosion under my right wing.

“Col. Edwinston called for a regrouping at 15,000 feet to return home. The little ships were identified as Yaks. On the way home my right engine quit. It was then that I was told by my escort, John Blumer, that I still had my belly tanks.

“After interrogation, by a general officer who asked each pilot’s opinion as to where he thought he was, I went back to the aircraft, to find no holes. Also, that only one gun had fired — three .50s and the 20mm cannon didn’t work. When the film of the mission was viewed, mine was about as good as the best. They said two damaged.”

Bowers did not receive any official recognition for the two Yaks he claimed to have damaged. Also recalling this mission many years later was Robert W. “Bob” Randall, then a novice second lieutenant in the 97th FS on his third combat sortie:

“I was flying on the right wing of the flight leader who was leading the left rear flight of the 97th. Two flights of the 97th were one quarter mile to my right. The 95th Squadron of 25 P-38s was ahead of us a mile or so as we crossed over lower Manfredonia [Italy] heading for the Yugoslav coastline. Our track took us about 50 miles south of the coastal town of Dubrovnik.

“About 20 minutes after we had crossed the Yugo coast we swung north and headed toward the little town of Kraljevo. We had climbed to around 12,000 feet and I had become an interested observer of the beautiful countryside. I had no official duties other than alert wingman.

“After a little over an hour of high-altitude tourism I was shocked into reality by

the sight of black puffs between our flights. Those puffs were exploding right on altitude and exactly on lead. The flak missed us only because the gunners below could not figure the wind drift of their shots at our altitude.

Was I surprised! They didn’t get a second chance, as our speed took us out of range in a hurry.

“I had already heard about the accuracy of the German 88mm gunners. Now I knew first hand. My thoughts then anticipated the terse order: ‘Here we are, peel off



An 82nd Fighter Group Lightning in flight, most likely over Yugoslavia.

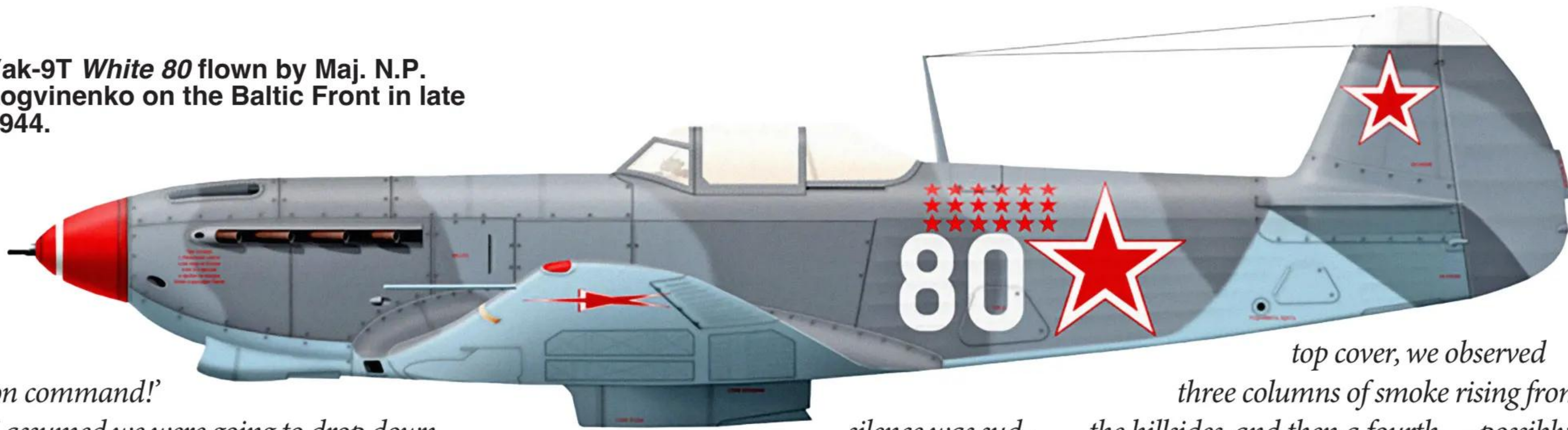


Pilots from 845IAP, 269IAD, relax by the tail of a Yak-9T.

THE YAKOVLEV YAK-9T

The Yak-9T was the second variant of the Yak-9 fighter family. Instead of the usual 20mm ShVAK cannon, the aircraft was armed with a 37mm Nudelmann-Suranov NS-37 cannon with 30 rounds. With this heavier armament in the nose, the cockpit was shifted 1-ft 4-in back to compensate and keep an acceptable center of gravity. The Yak series did not have particularly good quality control during construction and when the cannon was fired during testing, numerous oil and coolant leaks resulted from the recoil. Also, the Soviets were having manufacturing problems with the 30mm ammunition and in combat pilots were instructed to fire just two- or three-round bursts. Yak-9Ts were utilized against Axis shipping on the Black Sea and against tanks on the combat fronts. The 30mm shell could penetrate up to 40mm of hardened armor. Also, a single hit from the 30mm weapon would usually destroy an enemy aircraft. From March 1943 to June 1945, some 2748 Yak-9Ts were constructed and the plane was popular with pilots because of its heavy armament and low-altitude performance.

Yak-9T White 80 flown by Maj. N.P. Logvinenko on the Baltic Front in late 1944.



on command!’

I assumed we were going to drop down, come in low from the surrounding hills, and hit them. But strangely enough, the radio was silent after that short flak attack. Apparently the forward flights hadn’t seen the flak bursts and were unaware that we had more than likely passed right over a German road column. No one, myself included, had broken radio silence.

“Another ten minutes or so went by. We passed over a low mountain range. Radio

silence was suddenly broken with the command that the 95th would go down to intercept a now-visible road column and the 97th would hold at around 3000 feet over the terrain as top cover. Soon it was wild down there. Fires sent long plumes of smoke skyward from the line of vehicles.

“Bogey taking off’ came over the radio. Then, ‘I got him!’ A second ‘bogey’ was called, followed by another ‘got him!’ Flying

top cover, we observed three columns of smoke rising from the hillsides, and then a fourth — possibly more, as it was getting pretty confusing down there.

“Lt. Col. Robert M. Wray [the Deputy Group Commander], who was flying element lead in Col. Edwinson’s flight, had his sights on a ‘bogey,’ but then he saw a big red star on its fuselage. The radio squawked, ‘That’s a Russian Yak!’ Silence. Then, ‘That’s a G.I. [Lend Lease American] truck,’ followed by, ‘That looks like a GI staff car; there’s a red star on it!’ Fires and spires of smoke were visible for miles. Then, about two minutes later, the command came: ‘OK, let’s get out of here.’

“The attack had taken less than 15 minutes. The 97th, having the altitude advantage, landed well ahead of the 95th. Back at base our squadron leader, 1st Lt. Alger E. Durrell, bless his bones, must have gotten the word to debriefing to get all the gun camera films of the 95th before anyone could get out of their ‘38s. A film record of what had happened had to be preserved.”

The 96th FS’ Sgt. Dick Lingenfelter, then the Group’s combat film projectionist, later recalled:

“A whole array of brass suddenly came in upon us. Principal of these was Brig. Gen. Dean C. Strother [CO of the 306th Fighter Wing, of which the 82nd FG was a part]. Our operations officer handed me a reel of film and said, ‘Sergeant, will you please show these to the general.’ What unfolded on the screen was most interesting to say the very least. As the sequence began the viewer could see what appeared to be a motor convoy traveling from the right of the screen to the left. It appeared that tracer bullets were seeking out the lead vehicle, and as the latter became larger and larger in the picture it came to a halt. Apparently, it was an open, command-type car.

“All that went on up to this point hap-



An unidentified 82nd FG pilot consults with his crew chief as armorers prepare P-38L-1-LO 44-24408 for another sortie. He and it may have flown the 7 November mission.



Yak-9Ts of 909IAP, 130IAD, prepared for inspection.



Colonel Edwinson and his P-38 coded HA, in which he led the 7 November mission. Note the three stripes on its tail, which also identify it as the group commander's plane.

pened in a matter of three or four seconds, and because of the rapidity of the action the detail in the sequence was rather difficult to make out. Before the film ran all the way through the projector, the general asked that it be stopped and run through again, in slow motion.

"When he was able to see the detail better, the general said, 'Yes, I see it unmistakably now, Colonel [Edwinson]; there's definitely a star on the side of that staff car!' There was a pause, and then: 'Yes, but you've got to admit, general, that was pretty good shooting!'"

John Blumer also recalled that:

"After debriefing we were in the officers' club and there was a lot of chatter going on because everybody was very excited. It was the first fight for most of us. It was the only fight I was ever involved in in the 50 missions I flew. We

were still losing quite a lot of aircraft, but it was all due to ground fire. We simply didn't even see many German airplanes any more when I was there.

"Colonel Edwinson was in the club when I walked in and I guess I told somebody that I'd gotten one of them. Edwinson overheard me and turned and said, 'You got one too?' And I said, 'Yeah.' He just kind of grimaced and shook his head; he wasn't in a very good mood."

The mission report states that two Yaks were destroyed in these actions, by Lts. Katschke and Blumer; two were probably destroyed, by Lts. Blurock and Urton (whose victim was seen to spiral down, smoking), and one was damaged, by Lt. Urton. In fact, three of them were destroyed: Yak-9M #2715396, flown by Lt. Viktor

Vasilievich Shipulin; Yak-9T 2415351 (Lt. Dmitry Petrovich Krivonogikh); and Yak-9T 1215370 (a Lt. Zhestovskij). Shipulin and Krivonogikh were killed, while Zhestovskij managed to bail out of his Yak and parachute safely to earth. On the American side, both Lt. Brewer (flying P-38L-1-LO 44-24035) and Lt. Coulson (in P-38J-15-LO 43-28662) were killed. Phil Brewer was from Huntington, Indiana, and "Gene" Coulson's hometown was Wichita, Kansas (his middle name was Eugene). Brewer was 21-years-old and Coulson 22. Tom Urton recalled the following for Brewer's Missing Aircrew Report (MACR):

"While leading the third section of the 95th Squadron at 6000 feet, and covering the first two



White 87 was a Yak-9T serving with 531AP, 181IAD, on the Ukrainian Front. Slogan translates to "Workers of the Eagle."



"Curly" Edwinson posing in the cockpit of a Lightning, with the 96th Squadron's canine mascot, "Nutmeg."



This photo of a Yak-9T shows how the cockpit was moved slightly aft to accommodate the heavier weight of the 37mm cannon.

sections which were strafing, our high cover [97th Squadron] called in single-engine A/C scrambling from a field ahead of us and coming our way. Soon after, I saw a P-38 crash in flames ahead of me, as I prepared for action. Of the two missing men, the other [Lt. Coulson] was flying in my flight at this time so the pilot who crashed must have been Lt. Brewer. We engaged the single-engine A/C shortly thereafter, and it was not until several passes

were made by them at our formation that I realized they were Russian Yaks. Then I did everything in my power to break away, and finally did."

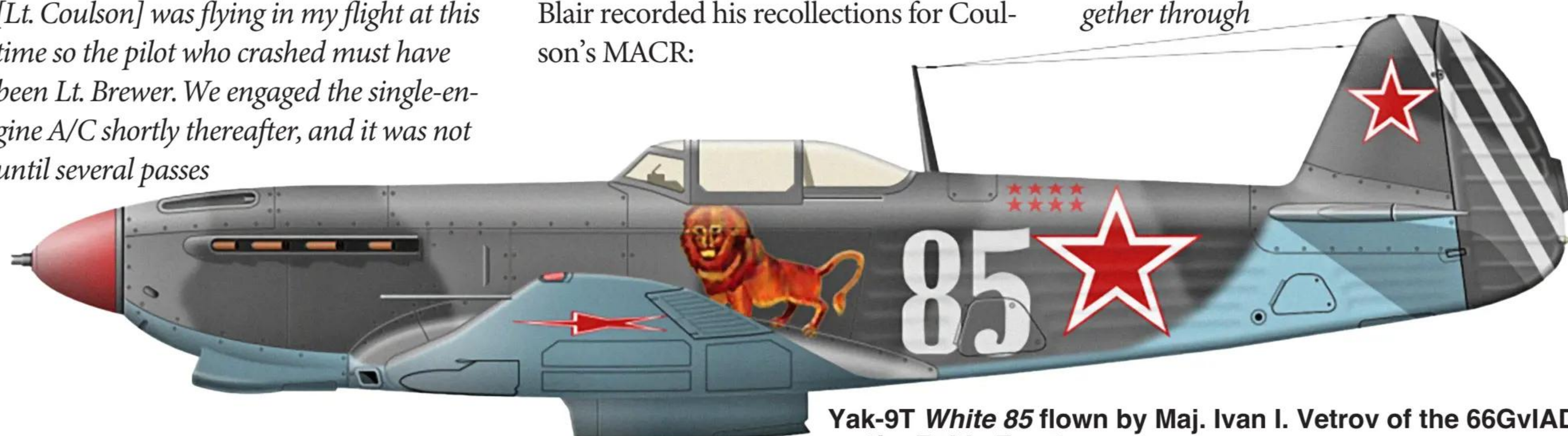
The 95th Squadron's 2nd Lt. Walter J. Blair recorded his recollections for Coulson's MACR:

"While flying on Lt. Coulson's wing in Lt. Urton's section, at 6000 feet, covering the first two sections of the 95th Squadron who were strafing, our high cover called in single-engine aircraft were taking off from a field ahead of us and were coming our way. Suddenly a single-engine aircraft was closing from nine o'clock. We broke to the right and then to the left during which time I was trying to release my belly tanks. When the flight was together again there were only three P-38s. Lt. Urton called each one by name and Lt. Coulson did not answer."

Ironically, Coulson had been involved in another very unusual incident nine days earlier, on 29 October. Southeast of Linz, Austria, a flight of 95th FS P-38s, after strafing a railroad between Wels and Kienburg, had been accosted by a single, early model Mustang (P-51B), painted in the USAAF's old Olive Drab and Neutral Gray scheme, that had been tailing them for a while. Two of the P-38 pilots were covering their flight leader — who was on single engine due to his other engine having been damaged by AA fire — as they headed back to Italy. One of them, Lt. Coulson, turned into the threatening Mustang, which seemed to be targeting the crippled Lightning. He naturally assumed that it was flown by another USAAF pilot who had not yet identified the P-38s as friendly, and his intention was to warn it off. Shockingly, it opened fire at a range of 4000 feet and continued to fire as it came closer. Coulson fired back reflexively in self-defense and saw his short burst strike the Mustang's canopy and engine, whereupon it rolled over, dove straight down, and crashed into a mountain.

Lt. Lee K. "Kitty" Carr was also on the mission and he recounted:

"Gene Coulson was my best friend. I knew Gene as a brother and we flew together through



Yak-9T White 85 flown by Maj. Ivan I. Vetrov of the 66GviAD on the Baltic Front.



97th FS pilots checking out their parachutes from the Parachute Department before a mission in late 1944 or early 1945.

P-47 training and P-38s to combat. On 29 October 1944, the mission was an escort for B-24s to Munich. After takeoff we, the 95th FS, went into a combat formation [in trail formation]. Major Warner F. Gardner, an ace and an original Flying Sergeant, had piloted just about every military plane except the B-29 and insisted we fly this formation as it saved fuel. We were more relaxed and we were ready for combat as soon after takeoff as possible. The day before when we had reached our rendezvous point with the bombers, a lone Mustang was spotted. This Mustang slid in and flew formation with us. At one point just off my wing, he appeared to be just a friendly but lonely Mustang pilot.

"We soon picked up our bombers and escorted them to Munich. After dropping them at the IP, most of us hit the deck and picked up a few targets to strafe. It wasn't long until most of us were low on ammo so we started rejoining. Lieutenant [Bill] Hawthorne had been hit by ground fire and was on a single engine. He had his flight with him so Gene and his wingman joined up to make six Lightnings. They all slowed down to stay with the damaged P-38 and give Lt. Hawthorne a little more protection. Gene and his wingman flew above as top cover when the Mustang appeared and came in as if on a gunnery pass. When spotted, they broke into him and he would always break



Lieutenant Alger "Al" Durrell dons his Mae West prior to another mission. Durrell led the 97th Fighter Squadron on the infamous 7 November mission.

away. This occurred several times.

"Finally, out of a low cloud, the Mustang looked to be making another pass but headed straight for Lt. Hawthorn. This time the Mustang came on in. Gene broke down into him and called out, 'Here comes that Mustang again.' He was in much too close. We always made it a practice to break into any plane headed into us. Gene had his gun sight on as usual and took a deflection aim on the Mustang. He did not have his gun switch on and this is where Fritz made his fatal mistake as he pulled up and started firing at Gene.

"Seeing this, Gene, with perfect reflexes,

hit the gun switch and pulled the trigger. He had the Mustang in a perfect deflection shot. His shells streamed down the engine and into the cockpit. The pilot never bailed out. Someone called and said, 'Who shot down that Mustang?' No one uttered a sound. For several days and nights, Gene had it very rough, until the word came through that he was given a confirmed victory."

As can be imagined, when this incident was reported back in Italy it created a great deal of consternation. However, after it was finally determined that no 15th AF P-51 had been lost that day, it was assumed that it was a captured, Luftwaffe-flown aircraft, and Lt. Coulson was



97th Squadron pilot Lt. Bob Pflueger poses with his assigned P-38, named *Lois*. (Note the colorful “Devil Cat” squadron insignia patch on his A-2 jacket.) Late in the war, each of the 97th’s flights displayed a different playing card symbol on the noses of its planes for identification purposes. It isn’t known whether Pflueger and/or *Lois* flew the 7 November mission.

credited with an official aerial victory. (The Group’s Daily Operations Report states that, “Five pilots saw the P-51 from close range and state definitely that there was neither U.S. nor German insignia on either the left side of the fuselage or on the underside of the wings.”) So, he had shot down an Allied fighter, and just over a week later he was shot down, and killed, by another Allied fighter.

Earlier on the 7 November mission another 82nd FG pilot had been lost

when the 96th Squadron attacked a truck convoy. Flight Officer George M. Howard, the #4 man in one of its flights, later described what happened for the missing pilot’s MACR:

“Captain Charles King, my element leader, and I were alone since our flight leader was damaged on the first pass on a convoy east of the town of Sjenica. Captain King and I proceeded northeast of the town where a truck convoy of 15/20 1½-ton and

2-ton trucks were halted on the mountain-side. Captain King and I made one pass from the southwest, then swinging around into the northwest we made another pass from the north. The ground fire was intense when Capt. King started down over the mountain. Both of his engines being hit at approximately the same time. His left engine went completely out, with his right engine giving very little power. Captain King apparently overshot his field to belly in and hit into the side of a mountain where his plane burst into flame. I did not see any sign of life or escape from the wreckage.”

Miraculously, King did survive the crash and was able to extricate himself from the wreckage of his plane, P-38L-1-LO 44-24392, despite having been badly burned and his neck being broken. He was soon rescued by some Chetniks — Serbian nationalist guerrilla fighters (partisans). They included two doctors, who attended to his injuries. He was then carried from place to place until they arrived at the headquarters of the commander of the Chetniks, Gen. Draža Mihailović. He was evacuated to Italy by air shortly thereafter and was subsequently returned to the US to recuperate. Captain King had just joined the Group the month before. (Five other P-38s were damaged by AA fire on this mission but they all made it back to Italy.)

It should be noted that the 96th’s targets were German. As mentioned in the mission report, it went into action first, as the 95th and 97th Squadrons proceeded farther east, eventually over-running their target area.

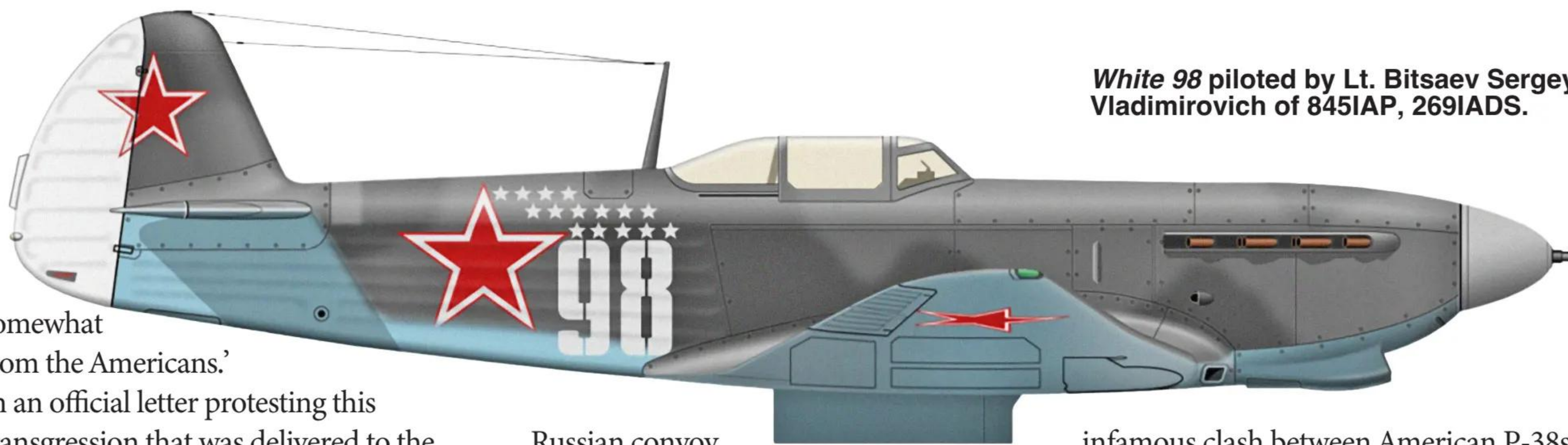
The Russians had actually captured Niš and Aleksinac several weeks earlier, and the Yak units in question, the 659th and 866th IAPs (*Istrebitelnyi Aviatсионnii Polk*), or regiments — similar to USAAF groups — had soon occupied the airfield at Niš. One Yak flight that was scrambled from it to protect their comrades on the ground from the P-38s on 7 November was led by 866th IAP squadron leader *Kapitan Aleksandr Ivanovich Koldunov*, a highly decorated fighter pilot who at the end of the war was Russia’s eighth ranking ace, with 46 aerial victories. It was he who shot down Lt. Coulson, while Lt. Brewer was shot down by a pilot of a 659th IAP alert flight that had taken off first.

Not, perhaps, surprisingly, the Russians’ account of this air battle differed



Left to right: 95th FS pilots Lee “Kitty” Carr, Phil Brewer, Eldon “Sid” Coulson, and John “Duck” Duckwitz. Brewer and Coulson, who were both killed by Russian Yaks in the air battle near Niš, are wearing the 95th’s “Mr. Bones” squadron insignia patches on their A-2 jackets. Lieutenant Carr destroyed three Soviet trucks that day — one of which was towing a cannon.

White 98 piloted by Lt. Bitsaev Sergey Vladimirovich of 845IAP, 269IADS.



somewhat from the Americans.’

In an official letter protesting this transgression that was delivered to the US Military Mission in Moscow on 10 November, Gen. Aleksei Innokentievich Antonov, the Deputy Chief of the Red Army General Staff, described it from their supposed perspective:

“A protecting group of nine Soviet fighters took off from the Niš Airdrome. The Soviet planes were attacked while they were gaining altitude in spite of the fact that they were clearly marked as planes of the Red Army Air Force. Nevertheless, for 15 minutes the American Lightning planes continued attacking the Soviet fighters, forcing them to defend themselves. The attack of the Lightnings was stopped only after the leader of the group of Soviet fighters, Capt. Koldunov, at the risk of being shot down, took position under the leader of the group of American fighters and showed him the markings on his plane.”

The US War Department’s official response included this conciliatory statement: *“To Captain Koldunov of the Red Air Force high tribute must be paid in this connection for his courage and quick thinking by exposing himself in order to identify his flight as friendly and so terminate the engagement.”* It also contained the admission that Col. Edwinston actually *“began his strafing at Kruševac and continued through Čićevan to Niš.”* The former two towns were about 20 miles northwest of Aleksinac.

As Gen. Antonov detailed in his communique, the carnage on the ground near Niš was much worse than that in the air. The P-38 pilots had killed or wounded 63 soldiers of the Soviet Army’s 6th Guards Rifle Corps. Among the dead was its commander, Lt. Gen. Grigorii P. Kotov.

Although the US Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed their “deep regret” for what had happened, the Soviets had to be further mollified. Colonel Edwinston was the obvious scapegoat, since he *had* commanded the USAAF unit in question and *had* led both the mission and the attack on the

Russian convoy.

He was relieved of the 82nd FG’s command effective 22 November and returned to the US. Any detrimental effect this may have had on his Air Force career was minimal and temporary. Having fought Russians (even though they were then allies) would hardly have been a negative factor in the US’ post-World War II Cold War military, and Edwinston was promoted to brigadier general in 1953.

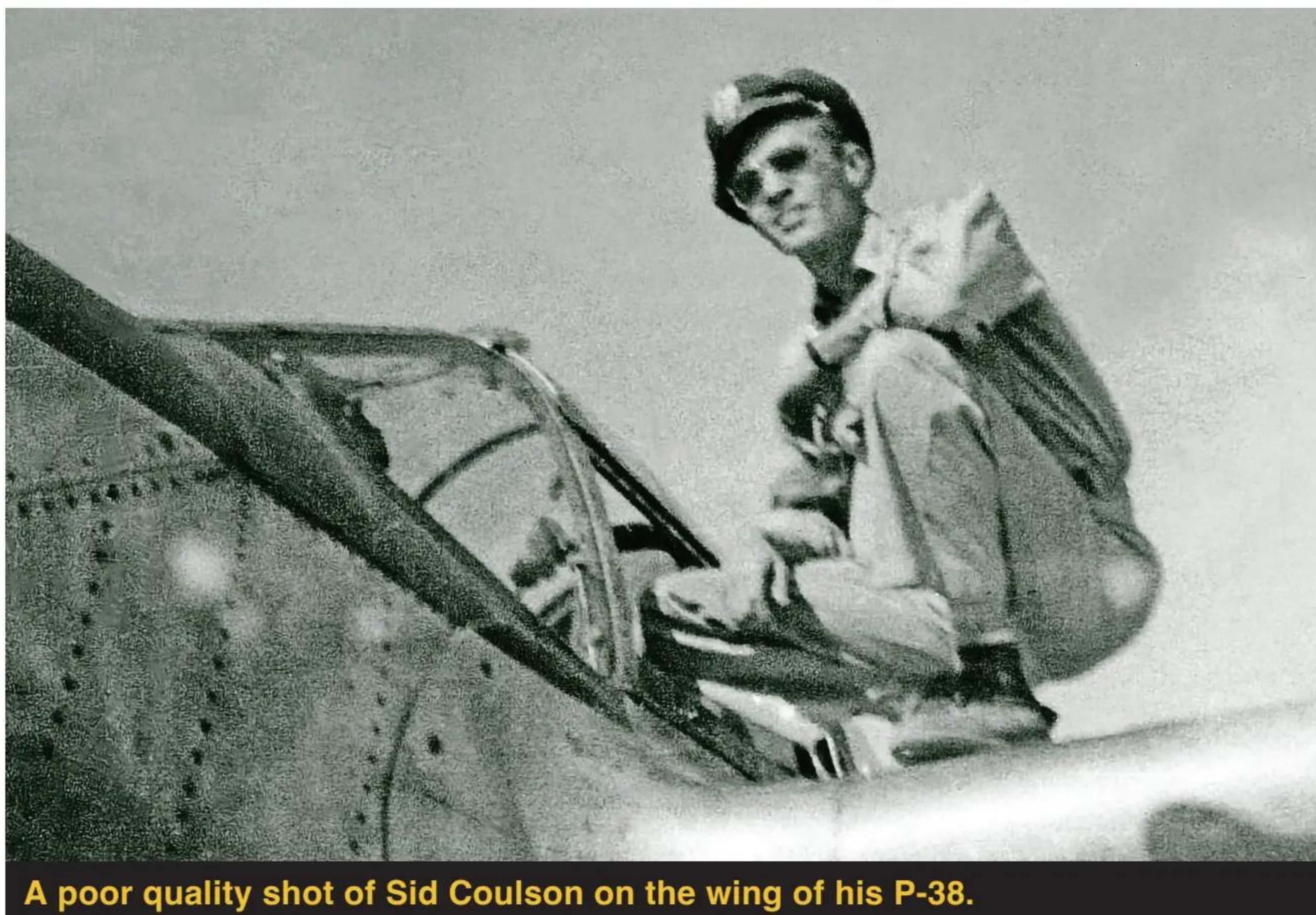
As the Eastern and Western Allies closed in on Germany — and narrowed the gap between them — during the final months of the war, more such hostile aerial encounters took place, though none of them was as serious as the 7 November 1944 incident. There were numerous other clashes between American and Russian pilots, involving aggressive passes, warning shots, and even damage to or the destruction of their supposedly friendly opponents’ planes. When it became obvious that Germany’s defeat was imminent, the old animosity between the two “Allied” countries intensified, as they both began contemplating and planning for the post-war governance of Europe — and their geopolitical dominance.

Almost exactly six years after that

infamous clash between American P-38s and Russian Yaks over Yugoslavia, fighter pilots of the two countries had their initial skirmishes over Korea, which continued and intensified for the next 2.5 years. (Soviet Air Force pilots’ involvement in the Korean War was a poorly kept secret.) Since then, there have been other Cold War clashes between American and Russian aircraft, in which a few of them on both sides were shot down. **AC**



Lieutenant Coulson as an aviation cadet during training.



A poor quality shot of Sid Coulson on the wing of his P-38.

COST OF WAR

THE BATTLE OF FRANCE SAW THE
AIR FORCE OF FRANCE, THE BRITISH
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, AND ALLIED
AIR ARMS VIRTUALLY DESTROYED
BY GERMANY'S LIGHTNING WAR
BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



This battle-damaged MS.406C1, an improved variant of the MS.405, came down in a French farm after tangling with Messerschmitt Bf 109Es. The MS.406 was France's most numerical fighter and one of only two French designs to be built in numbers exceeding one thousand. Entering service in early 1939, the MS.406 with its retractable landing gear, monoplane configuration, and enclosed cockpit was considered to be the *Armée de l'Air*'s first modern fighter. Although sturdy and relatively maneuverable, the MS.406 was underpowered and underarmed.

Today, casual historians regard the Battle of France as sort of a walk-through by German forces. It was far from that. The Germans committed some 141 divisions to the invasion of France and they were opposed by 135 French and Allied (Belgium, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Luxembourg) divisions. The German aerial armada composed some 5638 aircraft against a French and Allied force of around 2900 aircraft. For the most part, the aircraft flown by the *Luftwaffe* were vastly superior to those of the *Armée de l'Air*. The French flew a bewildering collection of flying machines — from the relatively modern to planes looking like they emerged directly from the Great War. The *Luftwaffe* hit the French forces hard in the air and on the ground, with the goal of destroying as many on the ground as possible while the German army would take over airfields with lightning speed. The Germans began their move on 10 May 1940 and by 25 June, it was all over. As the Germans pushed west, it seems many French crews simply abandoned their aircraft rather than making an attempt to fly the English Channel to relative safety of Britain. This left the enemy with lots of intact and relatively intact aircraft and these Germans are using an *Armée de l'Air* Morane Saulnier MS.405 as a prop for a photo to send to the folks back home. The MS.405 was an attempt to create a more modern fighter for the *Armée de l'Air* and the first example flew on 3 February 1938. The aircraft was fitted with one 20mm cannon firing through the nose and two 7.5mm machine guns in the wings (note how they have been ripped from their wing mounts) while power came from a Hispano HS 12Ycrs V-12 engine of 900-hp. This particular aircraft was captured at a French airfield overrun by German forces. As can be seen in the background, some of the hangars are undamaged while the one on the right is partially collapsed.





Morane Saulnier MS.406C1 No. 923 appears to have suffered bomb damage at a French airfield. Note how German troops have cut out the insignias from the fabric. On the eve of the German invasion, ten *Groupes de Chasse* were operating MS.406C1 fighters but once the Germans began to move, some 150 MS.406s were quickly lost to *Luftwaffe* fighters while another 250 to 300 were knocked out of action due to other causes such as bombing, strafing, or simply being overrun by German troops while on their airfields.





One of the German goals was to capture as many French airfields as quickly as possible. This can be seen by a just-landed *Luftwaffe* He 111 parked behind the burned-out remains of an Advanced Air Striking Force Fairey Battle. The combined Allied aircraft losses totaled 2233, with many being destroyed on the ground or captured intact by the rapidly moving Germans.



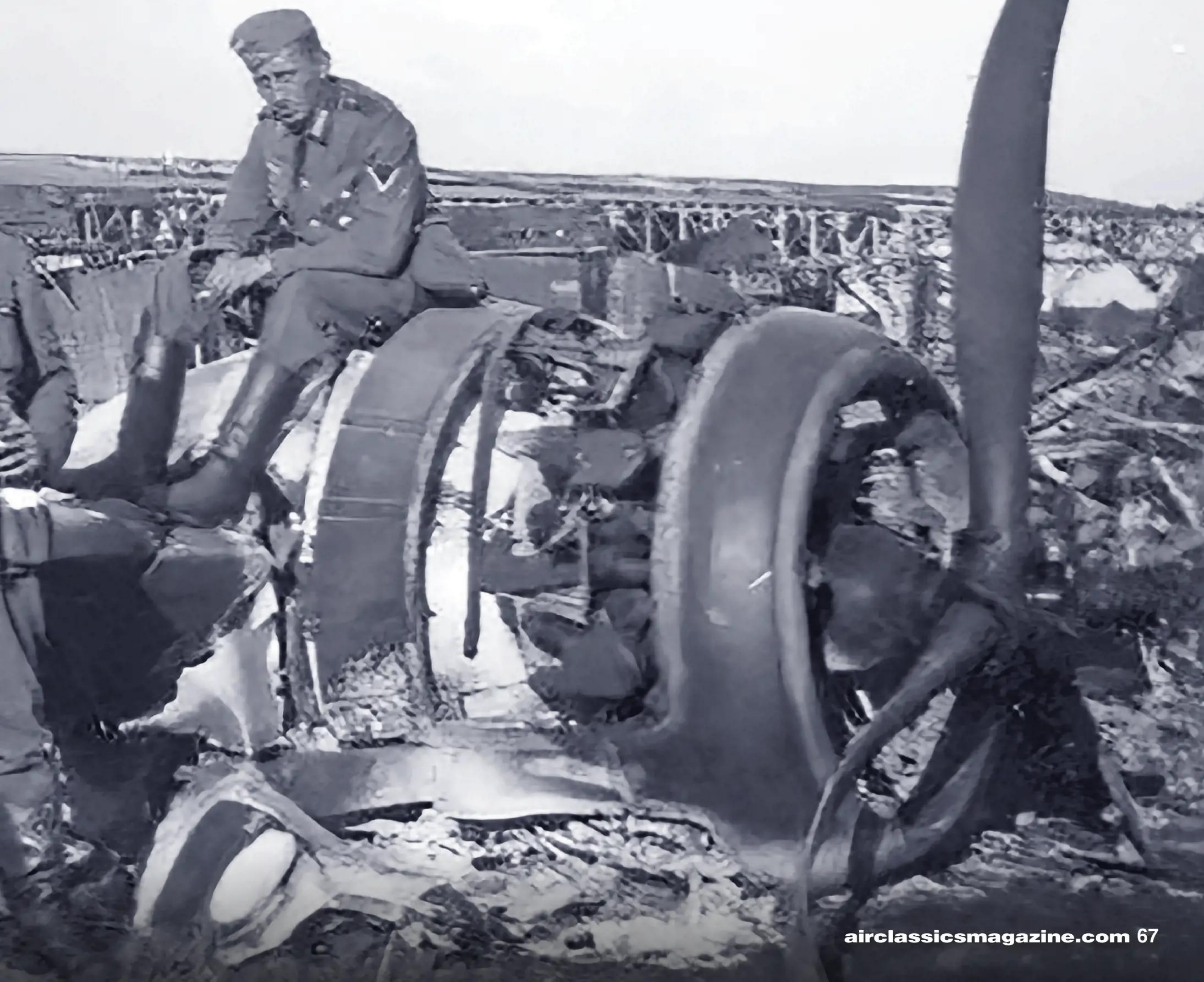
Fairey Battle PH*F P2332 from the RAF's No. 125 Squadron crash-landed after tangling with Messerschmitt Bf 109E fighters on 12 May 1940. The aircraft was taking part in an attack to destroy the concrete bridge spanning the Albert Canal in Belgium. The raid was a disaster for the RAF and the three crew of P2332 were taken prisoner after the Battle came down near the bridge.

Germans relax with the remains of a Royal Air Force Bristol Blenheim light bomber that had been caught on the ground during a *Luftwaffe* air raid. As part of the Advanced Air Striking Force of the British Expeditionary Force, Blenheims of Nos. 53 and 59 Squadrons moved to France but were taken completely by surprise on 10 May when the Germans pushed west in large numbers and considerable force. On 11 May, Blenheims of No. 114 Squadron were being prepared for a raid from their strip at Vraux when they were caught on the ground by Dornier Do 17Z bombers from 4./KG 2 who destroyed six of the light bombers and damaged all of the others.





One of the odder aircraft to be lost during the Battle of France was this Armstrong Whitworth Ensign carrying the British civil registration G-ADSZ and the name *Elysian*. A four-engine airliner capable of carrying up to 40 passengers on Imperial Airways routes (to be taken over by British Overseas Airways Corporation), the type was plagued by problems and various modifications only marginally improved the airliner's serviceability. With the start of the war, the Ensign fleet was acquired by the RAF and was used to ferry supplies and personnel to France. When it became obvious that the end was near, Ensigns flew escaping aircrew to Britain. Two were destroyed in France during 1940 while another was destroyed during a *Luftwaffe* attack on the Bristol factory at Whitchurch. The eight survivors were then transferred for use in the Middle East. *Elysian* was on an international scheduled flight on 23 May 1940 when it was fired upon by Bf 109Es. The transport diverted to Merville-Calonne Airport but on final approach it stalled and crashed in flames.





RAF Westland Lysander appears to have been caught on the ground in France during the German invasion. Some 175 Lysanders were sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force but the type was extremely vulnerable and 118 were destroyed in the air or on the ground. Survivors were evacuated to Britain, often carrying as many passengers as could be crammed into the fuselage.



Advancing Germans quickly cut off the fabric portions of downed French and British aircraft to send as gifts to the folks back home. This perfectly belly-landed Hawker Hurricane has had all its fuselage fabric cut off so troops could claim the roundels, codes, and serial. Thus, the British fighter is not identifiable.



Germans pose with a belly-landed Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IA N3200 that came down on a beach near Dunkirk on 24 May 1940. As can be seen, the coming and going of the tides rapidly began to bury the remains of the fighter with sand. Flying with the code QV, the No. 19 Squadron aircraft was being piloted by S/Ldr. G.D. Stephenson, the unit's commanding officer. After attacking a group of 21 Ju 87 *Stukas*, the Spitfire was set upon by a Bf 109E flown by Erich Rudorffer of 2/JG 2 and his shells damaged the Merlin's coolant system. Stephenson made a smooth belly-landing on the beach, quickly swapped some personal items with French civilians for clothes and eight days later found himself in Brussels where he attempted to find shelter with the American embassy. However, he was turned away since the USA was neutral at the time. He made his way to a nearby *Luftwaffe* airfield



Germans relax with a Morane Saulnier MS.230 parasol. This aircraft was the main primary trainer for *Armée de l'Air* student pilots during the 1930s. Aviation movie buffs will recall that an MS.230 was the new "advanced German WWI fighter" in the film *The Blue Max* where it was flown by occasional *Air Classics* contributor Lynn Garrison.



where he surrendered. He was treated well but was shipped off to POW camps where he would remain for the next five years. Returned to Britain, he stayed in the RAF and began flying jets. He was sent to the USA to fly the new North American F-100A Super Sabre. On 8 November 1954, he flew F-100A 53-1534 but the plane began to porpoise on takeoff. However, he got it under control and climbed to 15,000 feet where the chase plane saw the aircraft begin to porpoise again. The plane went into a spin and Stephenson was killed in the crash. This led to the grounding of the F-100A and an investigation discovered a manufacturing error that contributed to the crash. Also, the F-100A was modified to have a taller vertical tail. The remains of the aircraft were rediscovered in 1986 and a few bits were used to create a flying Mk. 1A that became airborne on 26 March 2014 as G-CFGJ.



Germans with another field of abandoned French aircraft including a small unidentified monoplane and a hulking Farman F.222, which was the largest bomber to serve with the *Armée de l'Air* even though it was wildly obsolete. Although difficult to tell, the aircraft had four engines — two pulling, two pushing. Early on, they were used for nighttime leaflet raids over Germany and when the Battle of France started, they were used for night bomber missions and three of the 24 F.222s built were quickly destroyed. On 20 June 1940, French fighter pilot James Denis loaded 20 of his comrades into an F.222 and flew to Britain where he joined the RAF and became an ace.



Field full of French aircraft abandoned to advancing German forces. Desperate to order as many new aircraft as possible to counter the threat of a rapidly expanding German military, France ordered 200 Martin Model 167F light attack bombers. The French expected deliveries to begin in January 1939 but American arms embargoes delayed aircraft arrivals until early 1940. Known to French pilots as "Glenns," when the Battle of France began only four *groupes de bombardement* were equipped with the type. The Martins performed quite well and flew about 400 sorties with a loss rate of 4%. Immediately before the French collapse, many of the Martins were flown to North Africa while others were operated by the pro-Nazi Vichy government. In Vichy use, the Martins were used to attack British and Commonwealth forces during the Syria-Lebanon campaign of 1941.



One of the most effective French fighters was the Curtiss H75 and Germans were photographed posing with a belly-landed example. Problems with delivery of French-made fighters led the government to seek an export version of the P-36 but the Air Corps protested the contracts because it would delay American orders. However, 100 H75A-1 aircraft were supplied and began entering service in March 1939. During the Phony War and the Battle of France, *Armée de l'Air* H75 pilots claimed 230 aerial victories (out of a total of 1009) against 29 H75s lost. The H75s made up just 12.6% of the French fighter force but accounted for nearly one-third of the victories, clearly showing the superiority of the American fighter over French types. Captured H75s were supplied by the Germans to Finland.



Germans with the wreck of a Caudron Renault CR.714C1 Cyclone light fighter. Of wooden construction and designed to be built quickly, the plane was armed with four 7.5mm machine guns but from the very start the aircraft was deemed extremely inferior. On 18 May 1940, 35 examples were dumped on the Polish Warsaw Squadron — pilots that escaped from Poland and were flying for France but on 25 May the French Minister of War ordered all CR.714s to be withdrawn from active service. However, the Poles had no replacements and continued to fly the type and scored a dozen victories while losing nine in combat. The exact number of CR.714C1s built is not known but figures vary between 53 and 98. **AC**





DUCK DISCOVERY

THE MAPS AIR MUSEUM HAS MADE AN AMAZING "BARN FIND" THAT WAS LITERALLY IN THEIR OWN BACKYARD

BY DAVID PAWSKI, PEG DEIBEL, DEBBIE BUSSINGER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD JOHNSTON

I was very impressed after reading the "Rubber Ducks" article in the April 2025 issue of *Air Classics* written by Howard Carter. I believe seeing the MAPS GA-22A Drake gracing its pages

excited me the most. I do remember seeing the Drake arrive in less than perfect condition many years ago but MAPS volunteers quickly got to work and went through the entire

plane from nose to tail. A local body shop gave the Drake its immaculate glossy blue/yellow paint scheme complete with Goodyear logos.

MAPS Air Museum, short for Military Aviation Preservation Society, is located at Akron/Canton Regional Airport in North Canton, Ohio. MAPS now has some 60 aircraft from all eras of aviation development. We are all volunteers except for a few paid positions at the top and MAPS always seems to find a way to make the impossible not only possible but also affordable. We have been blessed particularly when it comes to donations.

One recent donation was a cache of airframes and parts from several Goodyear Ducks, which had been squirreled away, unknown to the aviation community, for 68+ years by Carl

The opening pages for the *Air Classics* article on the Ducks and Drake. The April 2025 edition is available as a back issue by calling 818-700-6868.



TOP: Who would have thought that several rotting rural buildings would hold the remains of several Goodyear Ducks?



Although extremely innovative, the post-war market for the Duck just did not exist.

Honell, an immigrant from Sweden. Carl earned his American citizenship after serving as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne from 1952-1955. Trained and experienced in aerial photography with the Airborne (the family shared some amazing aerial shots he took and snuck home), Carl obtained his private pilot license, likely at the Battle Creek Airport, shortly after being discharged. He married and lived on his wife Sallie's familial farmstead of seven generations in the rural area of Portage, Michigan, near Kalamazoo. His dream was to operate a business which would take aerial photographs of nearby farms.

Enter Ross Barker in 1957. Ross was newly discharged as an official photographer for the US Navy, who had served primarily at the Naval Air Material Center outside Philadelphia. Today, at 93.5 years young, Ross still proudly carries his official late-1950s US Navy identification and shares how he photographed many post-Korean War/Cold War military developments. In detail, he describes filming untried catapults (air pressure, compression, and black powder), ejection seats, and centrifuges — recording these experiments in precariously dangerous ground and aerial situations at a tiny Navy auxiliary airfield attached to the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Finally in civilian life in Michigan, Ross' wife, with a new baby, sought out other new



Leaking and filled with insects and wildlife, the derelict outbuildings held the world's largest supply of Goodyear Duck airframes and parts.



The hard-working recovery crew.



Removing a fuselage and parts for loading into a trailer. All airframes exhibited varying degrees of damage.



Two of the Duck fuselages.



Wing panels for a Duck.

mothers in the Portage area, ultimately gaining Sallie and Carl as lifelong friends for the Barkers. With common military backgrounds, the two men talked many times about this idea of an aerial photography business, but it never got off the ground because, as Ross says, “life got in the way.”

Ross first saw the Ducks in Carl’s chicken coop back in 1957, shortly after they met. With Carl’s passing in 2017 and Sallie following late last year, no other members of the Honell family have definitive information regarding how the Ducks made their way to the Honell farm, so we have a real aviation mystery! Carl’s granddaughter is Julie Forward and she recalls, “He [Carl] bought them from a man who had them in an old barn in Cleveland in the 1970s. The guy was going to scrap them, so Carl rescued the aircraft.” There is obviously some discrepancy concerning the date when the planes were obtained.

This process of MAPS Duck acquisition goes back to about 2015. Julie placed an online post regarding the Ducks and MAPS exchanged emails with her. It was apparent that, as long as Carl was alive, the Ducks would remain with him. Some private parties approached Julie, but she remembered MAPS with its long history with Goodyear and the restored Drake.

Earlier in 2025, Julie made the decision to reopen talks about donating the Ducks to MAPS. Since the museum is near the Akron Goodyear plant where the Ducks were built, Julie believed it would be the best fit to fulfill her family’s hopes of making at least one complete airplane to honor the legacy her grandfather’s wisdom in saving these rare aviation artifacts.

A MAPS team went to the Honell family property and surveyed the aircraft, which were jam-packed into several old structures. The team noted that raccoons were actively living in the aircraft while the smell of mold was quite strong. At some point, part of a roof had collapsed and this allowed more of the weather to enter. As a child, Julie recalled that she would invite friends over and tease them by saying a plane had crashed through the roof and there were still bodies inside!

Before the MAPS recovery crew



Dimmed by decades of caked-on dirt, this Duck fuselage still displays the company's logo and the blue and yellow color scheme.

arrived on 2 June 2025, the Honell family spent two days with a Brush Hog clearing vegetation and removing barn doors to allow access. The recovery mission was two-fold: First on the agenda was to recover all of the aircraft items; second was document the entire process. This would include interviewing Honell family members along with Ross Barker and his daughter regarding their thoughts on the recovery while also sharing their personal connections to the history. MAPS Museum Director Debbie Bussinger and Peg Deibel from the MAPS Louise Timken Library and Research Center handled the filming and interviews during the two-day recovery process.

Denny Bachtel, MAPS Board Chair, led the crew and commented: "Two of the aircraft were in an old chicken coop and the other two were in a four-stall garage. One roof was partially collapsed and the planes were laying on top of cars in the garage. The garage was packed with junk and the garage doors had to be removed to gain access. Trees were cut and the property was brush-hogged to clear a path from the back building to the front of the property. After a lot of work extracting the aircraft and parts, a little blood and a lot of laughs, we got things loaded and headed home." Recovery crew members also included MAPS Operations Director Dave Conner and volunteers Jim Jackson, Bill Barracato, John Harris, and Ken Olinger, whose father worked with Ducks and Drakes



The Ducks were surrounded by old cars and accumulated junk.



Some of the miscellaneous Duck parts recovered from the outbuildings.



Duck fuselage in a non-standard blue/white color scheme. MAPS member Richard Johnston states, "We have two distinct data plates, numbers 4019 and 4020. These are the first and second production Ducks that carried the registrations N5500M and N5501M. The third fuselage with no data plate could have the rudder with the registration of NX36281. This was c/n 4108, the second Duck produced and the first GA-2."



Rudder of NX36281, which is c/n 4108, the second Duck and the first GA-2.

during his 32-year Goodyear stint as an A&P mechanic beginning in World War II.

MAPS recovered the following Duck items:

- Fuselage Serial #4019 (first production plane)
- Fuselage Serial #4020
- Fuselage Serial ending in -3 (either 4023 or 4033)
- Fuselage no Serial #
- Three sets of wings
- One engine
- One set of landing gear
- Miscellaneous tail components and floats

I would also like to point out that long-passed MAPS member Nick Hauprich was a Project Engineer on the GA-22. Nick personally wrote a history of each Duck and Drake, which he compiled while working at Goodyear. I was able to obtain his notebook and it is filled with many original Goodyear photographs along with the data plate for serial 4022.

I found serial 4019 was flown by celebrities including Max Karant, Arthur Godfrey, Bevo Howard, Zack Mosley (of *Smilin' Jack* fame), and Betty Skelton. The Goodyear President flew 4019 in August 1947 on a trip to Lake Tamagami in Canada. Nick did not have a date for alleged "scrapping" of the airframe.

Duck #4020 was loaned out to several outfits for evaluation, beginning with the AFA in Westchester County, New York. The AFA was a six-man team of ex-Air Force pilots who found the Ducks favorable as reported in the November 1947 issue of *Air Force* magazine. The Duck rotated through several operators before coming back to Goodyear. Nick reports it was pickled on 17 October 1955 with 504 hours 5 minutes on the Hobbs meter and later scrapped... or was it?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We have a mystery within a mystery. As part of his research, Nick discovered that Goodyear had donated a Duck to Kent State University and in 1958 he began a dialog with the school in the hope of identifying the aircraft. Andrew Paton headed up the school's aviation technology section and he attempted to find a data plate. There wasn't one. However, he replied



Duck fuselages and lots of parts. Richard Johnston continues, "We have a damaged data plane that could be either c/n 4023 or 4033. I believe it is the latter. C/n 4023 suffered an engine fire and flipped over and was destroyed during an emergency landing per the *Air Classics* article. Here is where things get a little weird. The *Air Classics* article states that c/n 4033 [NC5514M] was recovered and returned to Goodyear. Parts of it were used to restore c/n 4031 back to GA-2B configuration. C/n 4031 had its landing gear removed and went to the Navy for seaplane evaluation as the XGA-2PT." After it was returned to Goodyear and reconfigured, it took the registration N5514M and apparently c/n 4033."

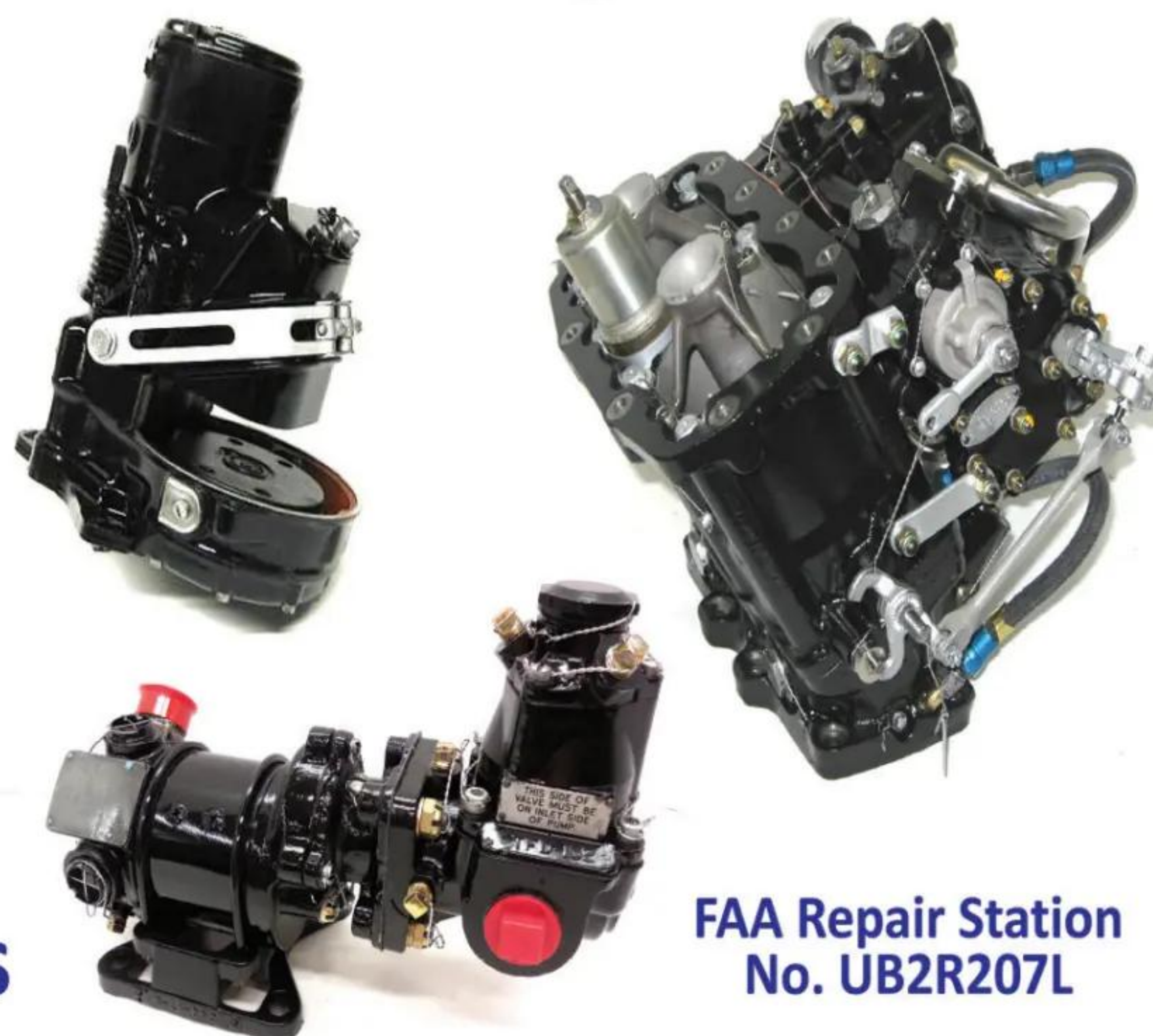
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Data plate for GA-2B c/n 4019. (John Harris)



Damaged data plate thought to be c/n 4033. (John Harris)



Magnificent image of three Goodyear airships overflying the MAPS museum.

“The number on the wings is NX5502M. The number on the rudder is NC5508M. There is seven some possibility that neither of these numbers is the one actually and originally assigned to the airplane. When we received this plane, it was in a disassembled state. In order to get a complete airplane, parts were gathered up from here and there and shipped to us. I am certain that these wings were not attached to the fuselage

and that there were other wings stored at the point where these were found. In the collection of parts, we found some duplication which indicated that it was not all from the same airplane.” Nick replied, “The wings from NX5502M were used on the third production model. This aircraft was used at the Aeronautical Research Foundation in Boston for noise level tests. Various propeller blade configurations were used along with

several types of exhaust silencers. The aircraft was also used as a test vehicle for yarn tuft flow survey. NC5508M had a very eventful life. First flight was on 22 September 1947. She was leased out to Paul Mantz Flying Service in Burbank. From there, she went to Southern Airways in Atlanta and Hawthorne Flying Service at both their Jacksonville, Florida, and Charleston, South Carolina, bases. Then back to Akron for refitting with cross-wind landing gear and up to Northwest Aviation Sales in Troutdale, Oregon. She was put up for salvage on 27 February 1951.” Of course, now we have to wonder what happened to the Kent State aircraft.)

The current plan is to make one complete airframe with the best parts for MAPS to display, honoring Carl and his family and showcasing Goodyear’s rich aviation history in Akron, which is just 15 minutes north of MAPS. A second restoration may be displayed in the Akron airport terminal where MAPS currently has several small aircraft on display.

In closing, I should also note that those of us at MAPS believe in “messages” regarding our aircraft and those we honor in our museum. As proof, fate had all three of the Goodyear airships greet the recovery crew and Ducks over the interstate as they nearly completed their journey to MAPS for the first time — what a stirring sight for the tired crew! Was this extremely rare sighting because Goodyear already knew of our recovery, or because it was the 100th Anniversary in Aviation for the company? Regardless, the next day the same three airships flew directly over MAPS, as though to ensure their older cousins had been safely unloaded and tucked in, completing their final journey home. We will have to see where this story takes us next... stay tuned! **AC**



Final view of a fuselage being removed from the storage shed. As of this writing, MAPS has not been able to discover how the aircraft wound up in this remote area — especially since Goodyear records indicate most of the Ducks were scrapped.



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(continued from page 14)

A silver C-47 aircraft, named "Louisiana Belle", is displayed outdoors at the National WWII Museum. The aircraft features the name "Louisiana Belle" in script on the side, a blue star insignia, and the letters "WD" on the fuselage. The tail fin has a large white letter "E" on a black background. The plane is parked on a paved area with a low metal railing in front of it. In the background, there is a large, light-colored building and a clear blue sky.

RARE LIBERATOR ON THE MOVE

mainstay of the 8th AF. All that is changing.

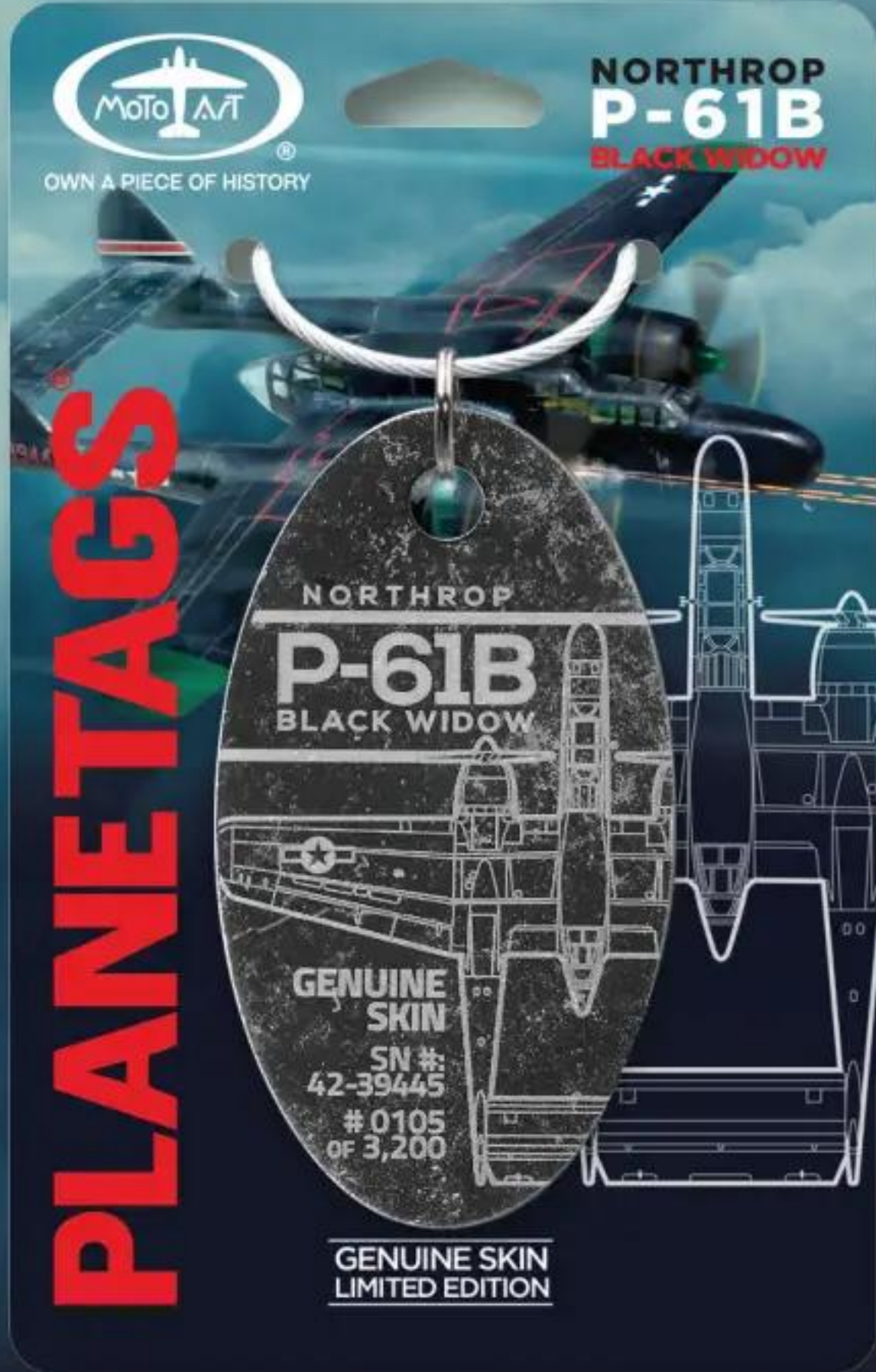
B-24J-20-FO USAAF 44-487821 has spent its entire life outside. The aircraft was gifted to the Spartan School of Aeronautics at Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the end of the WWII. Over the years, the airframe was stripped and vandalized. In 1978, it went to Barksdale AFB in Louisiana where volunteers brought it to as good of condition as possible. Over the years, it has carried the markings of *Laiden Maiden*, *Louisiana Belle II*, and now *Rupert the*

Roo II. At present, the plane is painted in an inaccurate desert camouflage but it is the first paint the plane has had during its lifetime and the weather at Barksdale was less than ideal for preservation. Volunteers at the base have put in lots of hard work but we wonder about the corrosion factor of the airframe.

The Mighty Eighth AF Museum is undergoing an expansion and improvement and we are sure that the B-24J will receive lots of great care but it is going to be a big project. Major General Jason Armagost, Eighth Air Force and the Joint-Global Operations Center Commander stated, “By rehoming to the Mighty Eighth Museum, it will allow the artifact to be kept alive and well for generations — a gift made possible not only by the USAF but by generous benefactors who understand the importance of WWII heritage.” This still leaves lots of rare USAF aircraft rotting in the open at various bases and their future is bleak unless they are taken over by the civilian sector. We will have more news on this matter in a future issue.

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Hercules N436NA on the ramp at McClellan shortly after arrival. All NASA markings and registration were removed shortly after the aircraft landed. (R. Cain)

NASA HERCULES GETS NEW MISSION

On 18 April, National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Lockheed C-130H Hercules N436NA departed from its decades-long home at Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia, on a short jump to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, before flying cross-country to McClellan Airfield in Sacramento, California, arriving a little over eight hours later **reports Roger Cain**. Originally ordered by the USAF as 86-0420, the Hercules was acquired along with two other HC-130Hs by the US Coast Guard and commissioned as USCG 1717 on 3 November 1987. Flying Coast Guard missions for the next 25 years, it was acquired by NASA in late 2014 at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Wallops Island.

With NASA, the Hercules was used for the next ten years to support airborne scientific research, provide logistics support, and the movement of agency cargo. It was also used to support technology demonstration missions, logging 1820 flight hours with NASA. No longer needed, the Hercules is now under the ownership of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and will most likely be used as a support aircraft for the organization. Of note, the NASA insignia and registration number were removed immediately after arrival.

Other Hercules news notes that Cal Fire's Tanker T-122 flew to its new home base at Fresno Yosemite International Airport on 4 May to become the first C-130 on station at the five locations scheduled for C-130 fire-bomber use. Tanker T-121 is currently undergoing tests and should be the second C-130 that will be assigned to an Air Attack base for the coming fire season.



Hercules T-122 making a practice drop as part of Cal Fire's new fleet of C-130 fire-bombers. (R. Cain)

The Spitfire on its nose after the incident in France.



Pushing the Mk. XIV back to the ramp. Note the destroyed five-blade proper.

FRENCH SPITFIRE ON ITS NOSE

On 30 May, Supermarine Spitfire Mk. XIV F-AYXX operated by the W Air Collection wound up on its nose during a landing accident at Biscarrosse/Parentis Airport in France where it was giving a flying display. It appears that while landing after the display, the plane hit a ditch that had been freshly filled and this caused it to go on its nose. This aircraft initially operated with the Royal Air Force as RM927 before being transferred to Belgium's *Force Aérienne Belge* on 14 November 1947 with the serial SG-25. After ten years of service, it was sold for scrap and became a roof-top display (with its wings hacked off) at a junk yard in Belgium. As interest in such aircraft began to take off during the 1960s, the plane was purchased by a British collector with the intent of restoring the aircraft. However, in 1969 it was sold to two Americans who kept the project at Earl Reinert's Victory Air Museum in Illinois. Restoration started but then the aircraft went through a couple more US owners until the late 1990s when it headed back to the UK and assumed the registration G-JNMA as restoration began anew. With work complete, the aircraft made its first post-restoration flight with the registration G-SXIV on 6 July 2022 piloted by the late Richard Grace. In 2023, it was flown to a new owner in France as F-AYXX. Fortunately, damage appears to be relatively minimal but the five-blade wood propeller was destroyed and it is not known if the Griffon engine was harmed.



B-25C on the Chino Airport ramp during June. The Wright R-2600 radials and cowls have now been fitted. (U.N. Owen)



Hughes installed an airstair door on the left side of the fuselage as well as very large picture windows and Aero Trader has faithfully restored these items. (U.N. Owen)

HERE'S HOWARD!

The ultra-rare ex-Howard Hughes executive NAA B-25C made a rare airing on the ramp in front of the Aero Trader hangar at Chino during June. As can be seen, work is in the final stages on this most unusual aircraft. B-25C 41-13251 was originally sold surplus as N75635 and was purchased by Hughes in 1953 and modified into executive configuration. Now registered N3968C, the aircraft is owned by San Simeon Air in San Francisco and the lengthy restoration will return the plane to its Hughes executive configuration.

AC



*SURPLUS EX-MILITARY AIRCRAFT
LONG BEFORE THEY BECAME MULTI-
MILLION DOLLAR RESTORATIONS*



By the time Stearman N64991 was photographed in the 1970s, the venerable Kaydet was fast disappearing from the agricultural scene as it was replaced by larger and more efficient turboprop aircraft. Built as PT-17 c/n 75-3496, it was transferred to the US Navy as N2S BuNo 30057. The registration for the Stearman was cancelled in 1977.



Built as 44-34713, this Douglas A-26B-66-DL Invader served in Indochina with France's *Armee de l'Air* during the early 1950s. By 1955, it was stored at Clark Field in the Philippines prior to being put up for sale. Sold as N5538V, the aircraft was converted by On Mark as Marketeer N36BB *Coastal Luck IV* and finished in a very attractive yellow and white scheme. Fitted with upgraded R-2800s, paddle blade propellers, spinners, and speed rings, the plane was an exceptional performer. It was used in the film *Cash McCall* and in 1974 acquired by Mickey Rupp who applied this striking black color scheme as N26MR. It was then acquired by Don Whittington as N26WB. By 1988 it was with the Wayne County Sheriff Department in Detroit. It was then transferred to the National Warplane Museum in Geneseo, New York, and fitted with an eight-gun nose, which did not go well with the executive conversion. Today, the plane is in semi-derelict condition at Las Cruces, New Mexico.



On the ramp and ready to go at Mojave Airport during 1977, Douglas A-26B-20-DL 41-39215 N142ER had been operated by Embry Riddle Institute of Dayton Beach, Florida, hence the ER in the registration. Originally sold surplus as N5292V, the aircraft was converted to a Marketeer by On Mark Engineering with the registration N4000M. As can be seen, the plane was fitted with long-range drop tanks and at this point it was one of several drug running Invaders owned by Milt Stollak. The condition of the plane went downhill and it was acquired by an aviation museum and on 17 March 1985 it was being ferried gear down to a restoration facility. The aircraft was in poor condition and little had been done to ready it for the ferry flight. The accessory section for the left P&W R-2800 developed a fire and this resulted in the loss of fuel to the engine. Then, the right engine quit due to water in the fuel. Neither propeller was feathered and, with the gear down, the Invader dropped out of the sky trailing flame from the left wing. After a hard impact at Lawton, Oklahoma, the three aboard managed to scramble to safety but the plane was virtually destroyed by fire. The NTSB found that there had been inadequate maintenance, poor pre-flight planning, and operation with known deficiencies in equipment. The wreck was combined with wreckage from several other Invaders and made into a poor likeness of a US Navy JD-1 and traded to the Navy Museum at Pensacola. At this time, there was a profitable business in trading poorly restored aircraft to military museums.



By the early 1970s, most surviving Vultee BT-13 Valiants had lapsed into derelict condition. Once the most numerous of all surplus ex-military aircraft, today less than 50 Valiants remain in airworthy condition. N61312 was built as an SNV-2 for the US Navy. Seen stripped of its Pratt & Whitney R-985, it appears that the Valiant's last airworthiness certificate was in 1955.



NAA F-51D-25-NA USAAF 44-73129 was sold surplus at McClellan AFB in 1958 as N5480V. Painted in an overall flat red, it became a lead-in aircraft for the two NAA AJ Savage fire-bombers based at Van Nuys Airport. On 4 November 1965, it was substantially damaged after the tailwheel strut failed, resulting in a ground loop and gear collapse at Santa Monica Airport.



Grumman J2F-6 Duck BuNo 33587 has a long ex-military history. The Duck had a brief history operating with the US Coast Guard before being flown to Cal-Aero Field at Chino, California, where it was put up for sale with the War Assets Administration. It was sold for \$2500 and became NC67790 and moved to the San Francisco Bay area where it was restored and painted overall yellow. To give an idea of how little the aircraft had flown, it apparently had only 76 flight hours recorded. By the time the plane was photographed in 1960, it had become somewhat derelict. The bright yellow paint had faded and the cowl was missing but by 1961 it was with Richard Packard's Aircraft Specialties at Falcon Field in Mesa, Arizona, and he converted the amphibian into a 300-gallon fire-bomber. Operating as Tanker C07, the Duck was sold in 1966 to an outfit in Louisiana that used it to supply oil rigs. Then it was obtained by the great Frank Tallman and used in the film *Murphy's War*. Frank then painted the aircraft in Navy markings and used it as an aerobatic mount at the Reno Air Races and other events. It was then obtained and flown by Kermit Weeks until he traded it to the National Museum of the USAF where it is now displayed as a USAF OA-10A.



Repaired, the plane was purchased by Frank Barrena and named *Barrena's Bronco* and was photographed on the Aero-Sport ramp at Chino Airport. The aircraft's history becomes confusing. It was smuggled to Haiti, departing Van Nuys, and was briefly operated in that nation. Today, the identification for that aircraft flies with P-51D N51SL.



With its front cockpit covered over and the stock engine replaced with a larger motor and propeller, this Ryan PT-22 Recruit was given a paint scheme somewhat like that of a Boeing P-26. Built as USAAC 41-20603, the aircraft was sold surplus as N62130. At some point, it was restored back into stock condition and on 18 August 2020, it was substantially damaged when the plane departed the runway at Jefferson County International Airport, Port Townsend, Washington.



Built as Ju 52/3mg3e, this is another aircraft with an incredible history. Originally going to *Lufthansa* as D-AQUI, the tri-motor was operated on floats with the name *Fritz Simon*. It soon went to Norwegian Air Lines as LN-DAH *Falken*. With the German invasion of Norway in April 1940, it was taken over and transferred to *Lufthansa* with its old registration D-AQUI and the name *Kurt Wintgens*. After the war it was back in Norway as LN-KAF *Askeladden*. During 1947, it was completely rebuilt and operated by SAS until 1956 when it sank in Oslo Harbor. The aircraft was raised and rebuilt and then shipped to Ecuador where it flew with *Transportes Aereos Orientales* out of Quito as HC-ABS as seen in our photo. In 1963, it was withdrawn from use and in 1969 obtained by American crop-duster Lester Weaver who restored it back to airworthy condition and flew it to Dixon, Illinois, arriving on 22 November 1970. In 1974, it was purchased by aviation personality Martin Caiden, painted in German markings and operated on the airshow circuit as N52JU *Iron Annie*. In 1984 it was sold to *Lufthansa* and restored as D-CDLH (but carrying the historic registration D-AQUI — see our contents photograph. *Lufthansa* extensively flew it for promotional work but in 2019 it was grounded along with other flying vintage *Lufthansa* aircraft by new management. The Junkers will now become part of a new *Lufthansa* air museum that includes the Lockheed L.1649 Starliner that came so close to flying once again until the program was shut down.

F-51D-20-NA USAAF 44-72145 was another Mustang that sold surplus at the 1957 McClellan AFB auction, becoming N6169C in the process. Instead of being ferried out of the nearby crop-duster strip, the Mustang was placed on a barge in the Sacramento River and then towed to Oakland, California. In 1963, it was purchased by John Seidel who changed the registration to N311G and applied this very attractive red and white scheme with a sunburst design on the wings. From 1974 to 1983, the plane was owned by Clay Clabo and raced at Reno as *Iron Mistress* and *Fat Cat*. It then went to Pete McManus as N51PT who put on memorable airshows with the Mustang. The aircraft is now completely apart at Fighter Rebuilders where it is receiving a nose to tail restoration for owner David Ellison.

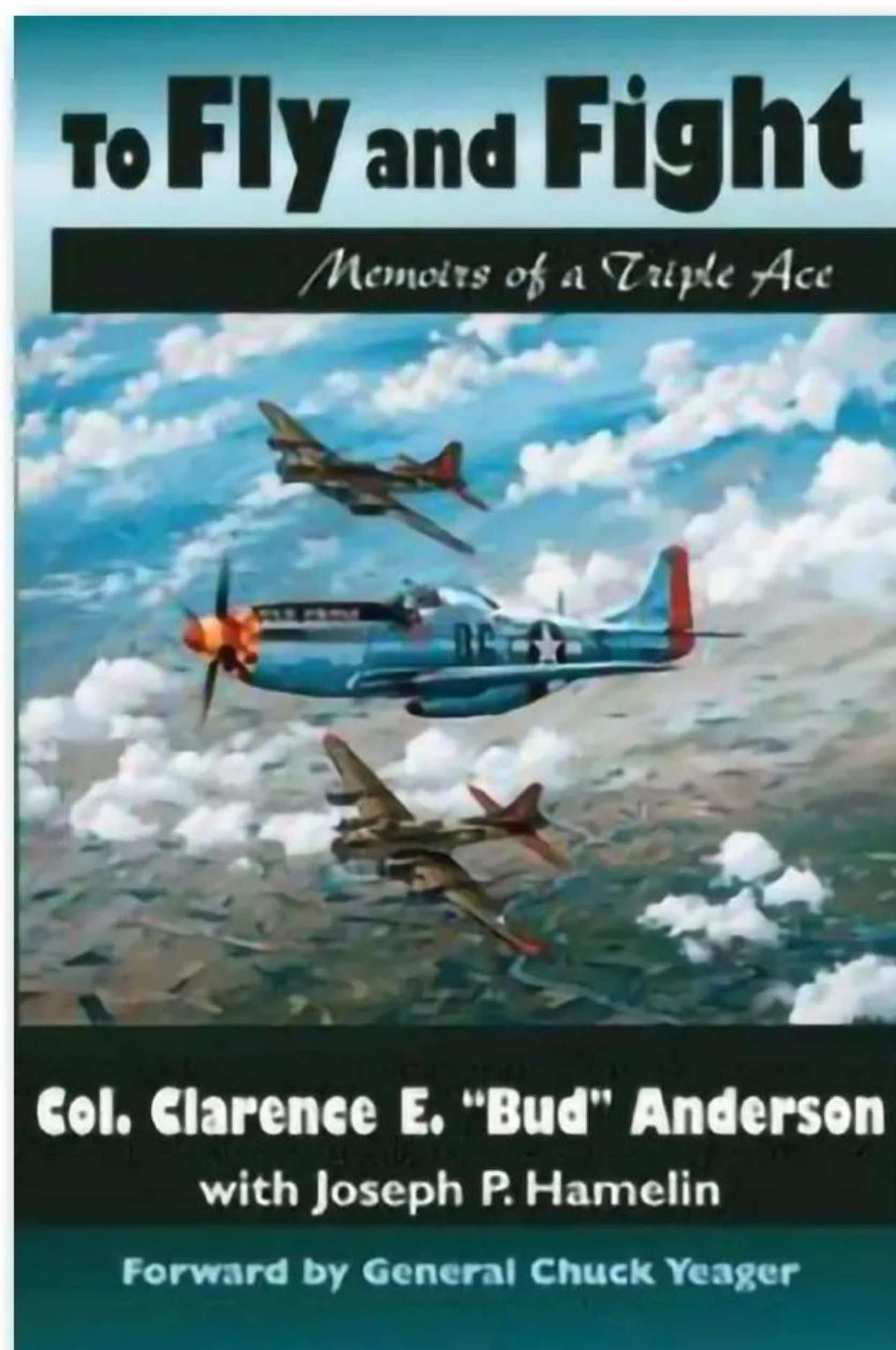
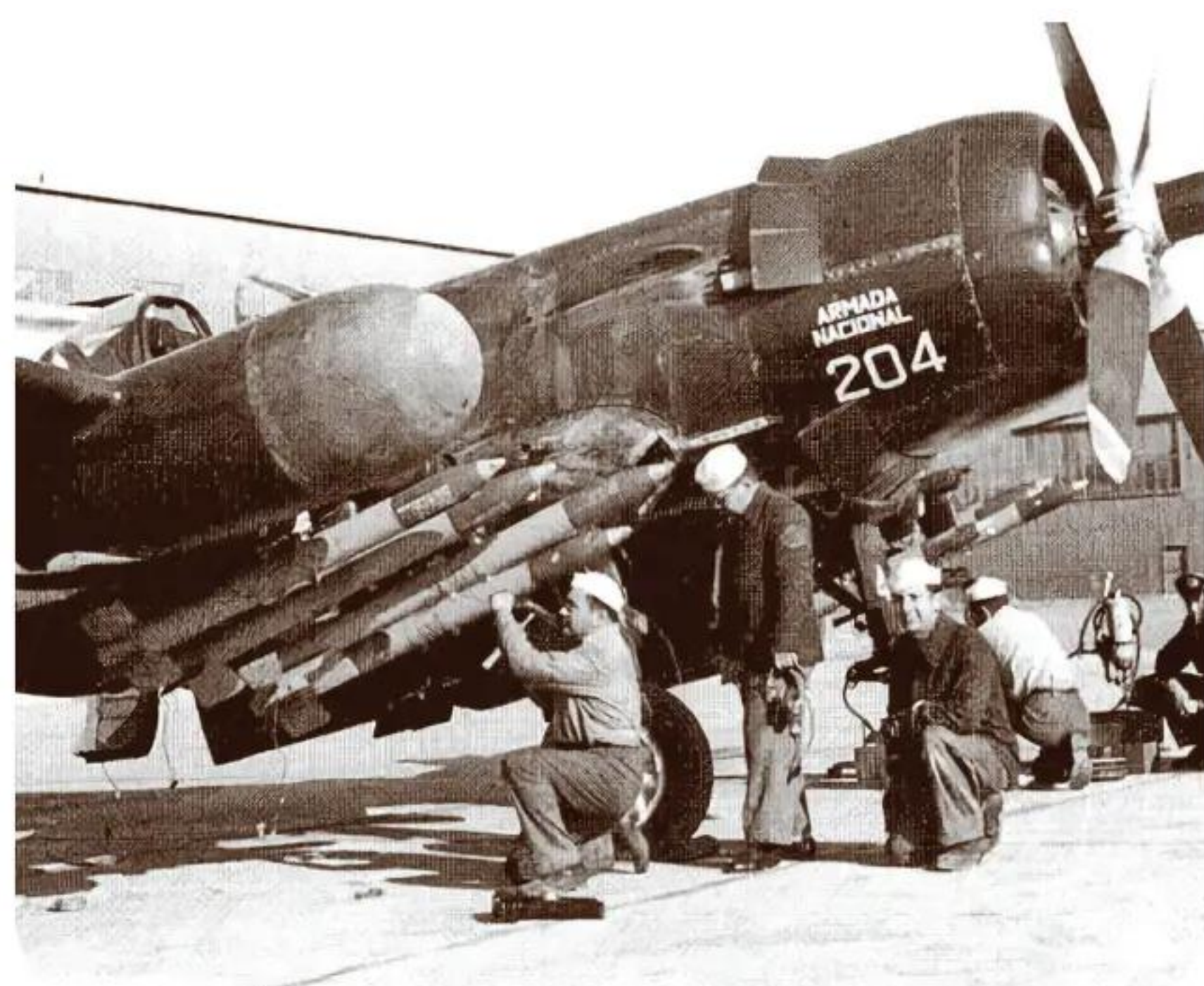


With their low acquisition cost, surplus Ryan PT-22s were often subjected to interesting modifications. PT-22 N46502 had its stock engine replaced with an inverted Ranger six-cylinder powerplant from a Fairchild PT-26 along with a modified cowl. Pants had also been added to the landing gear while an attractive paint scheme completed the custom look. N46502 was photographed during June 2008 at Hirzenhain, Germany, shortly after it had been imported to that country. Since the photo was taken, Recruit 41-20603 has been painted in an Air Corps style scheme.

AC

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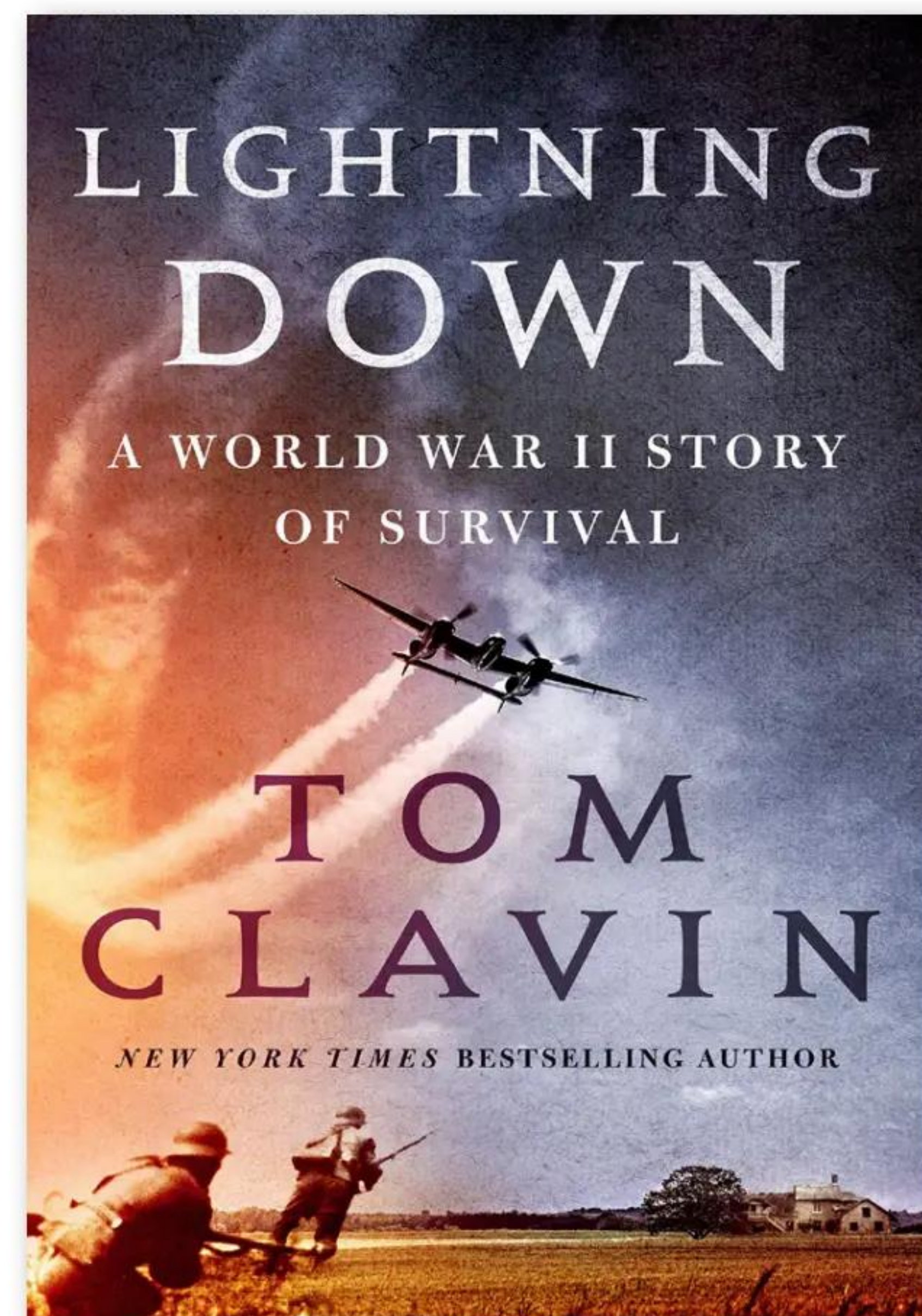
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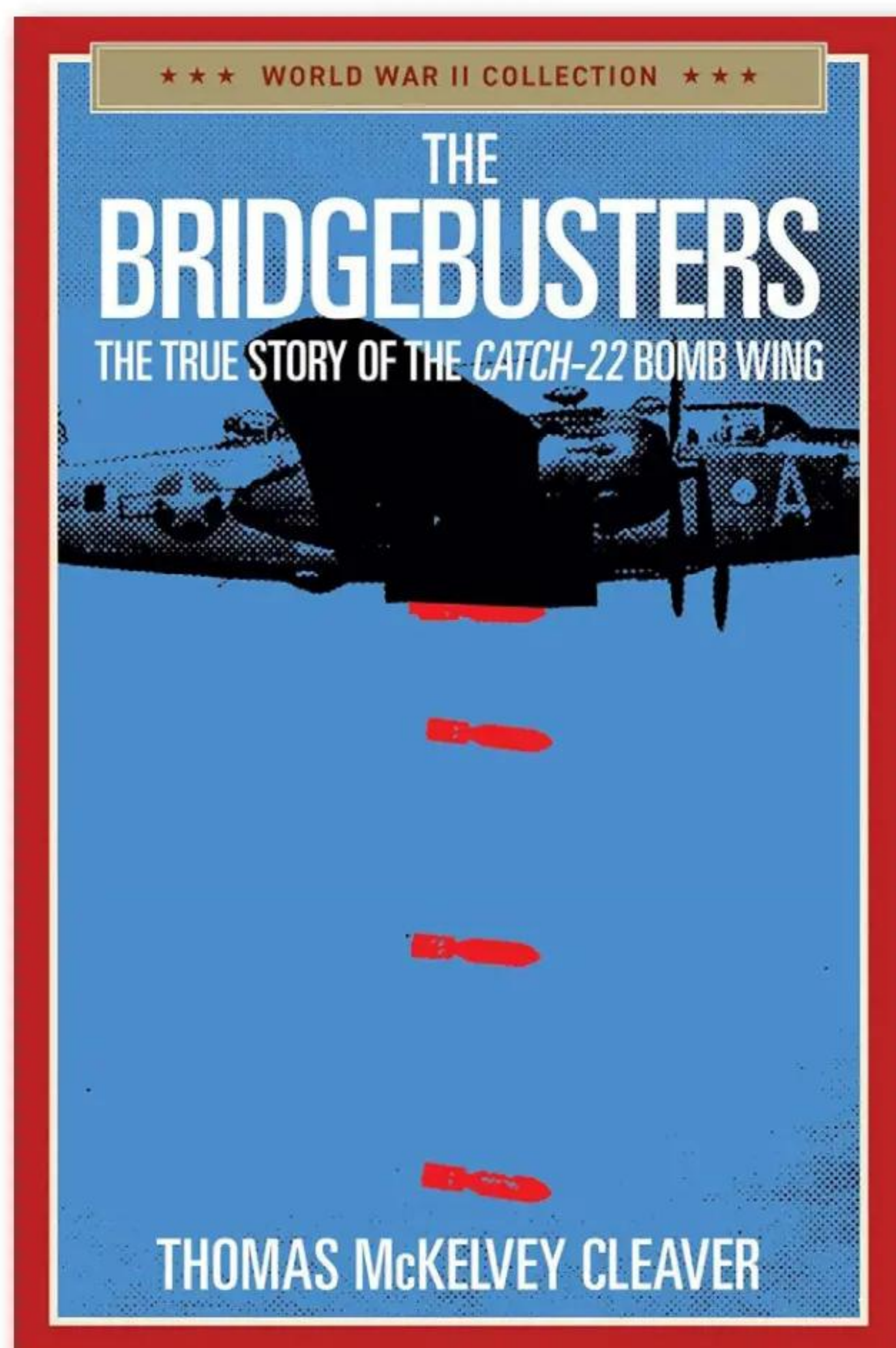
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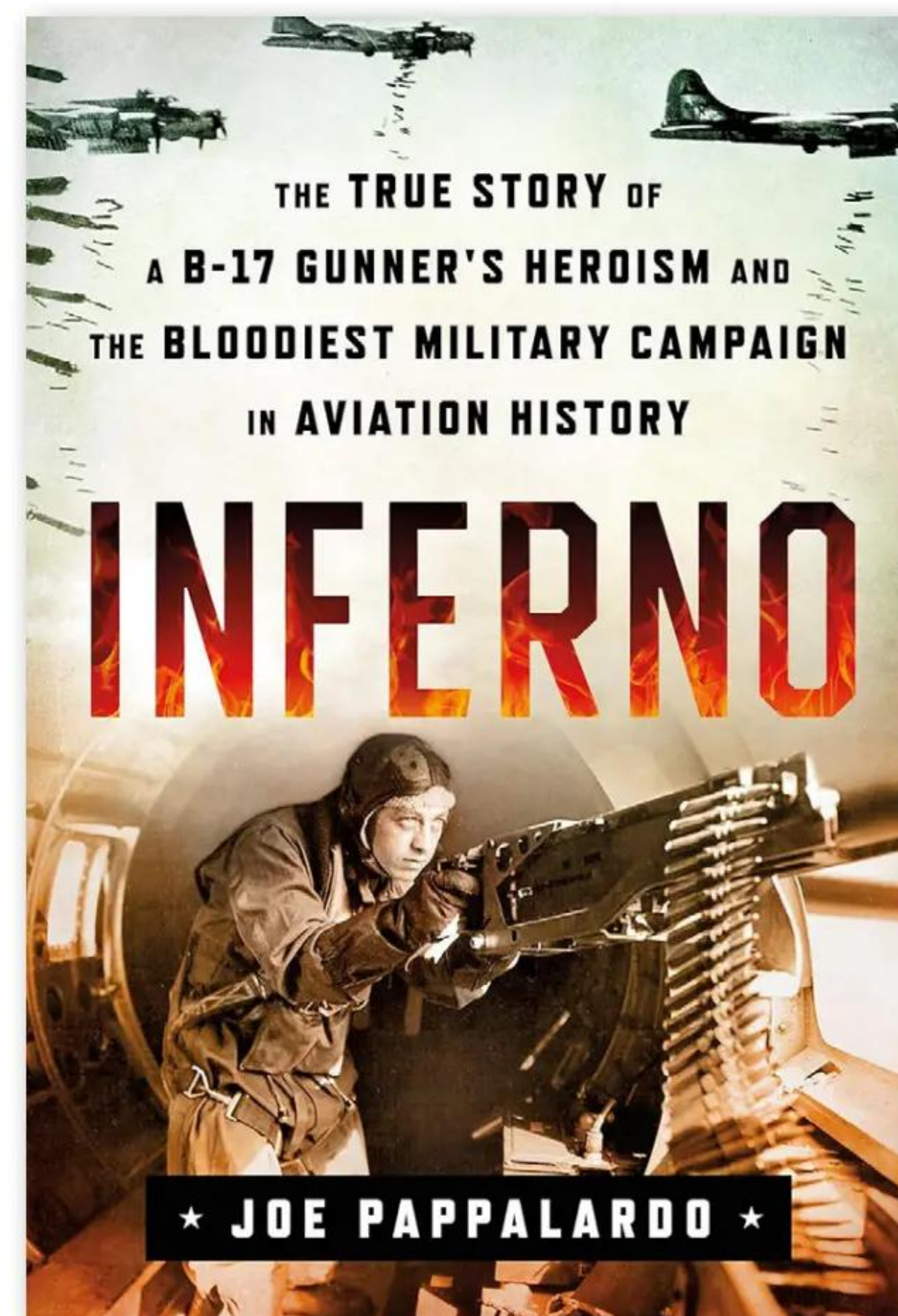
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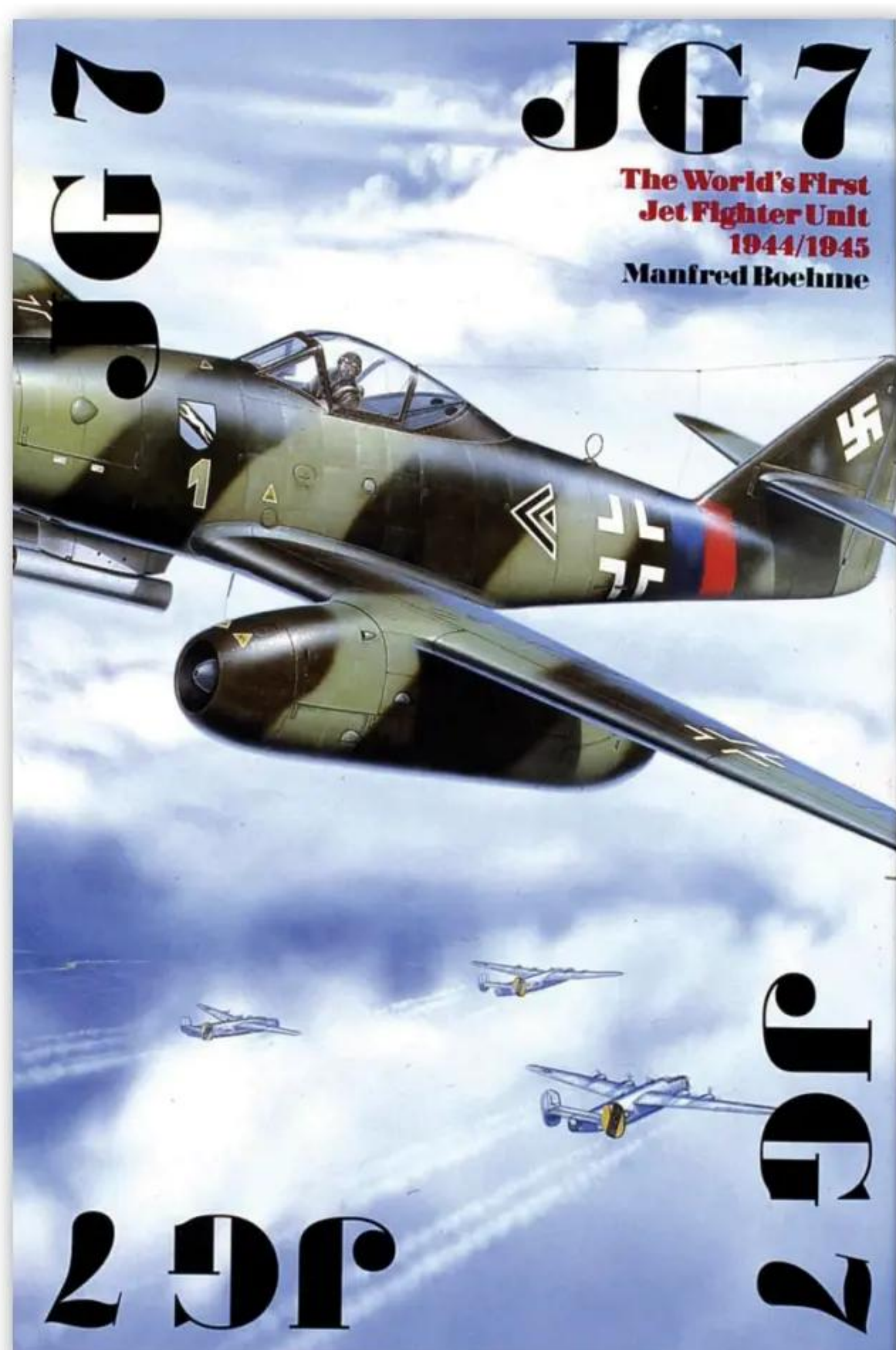
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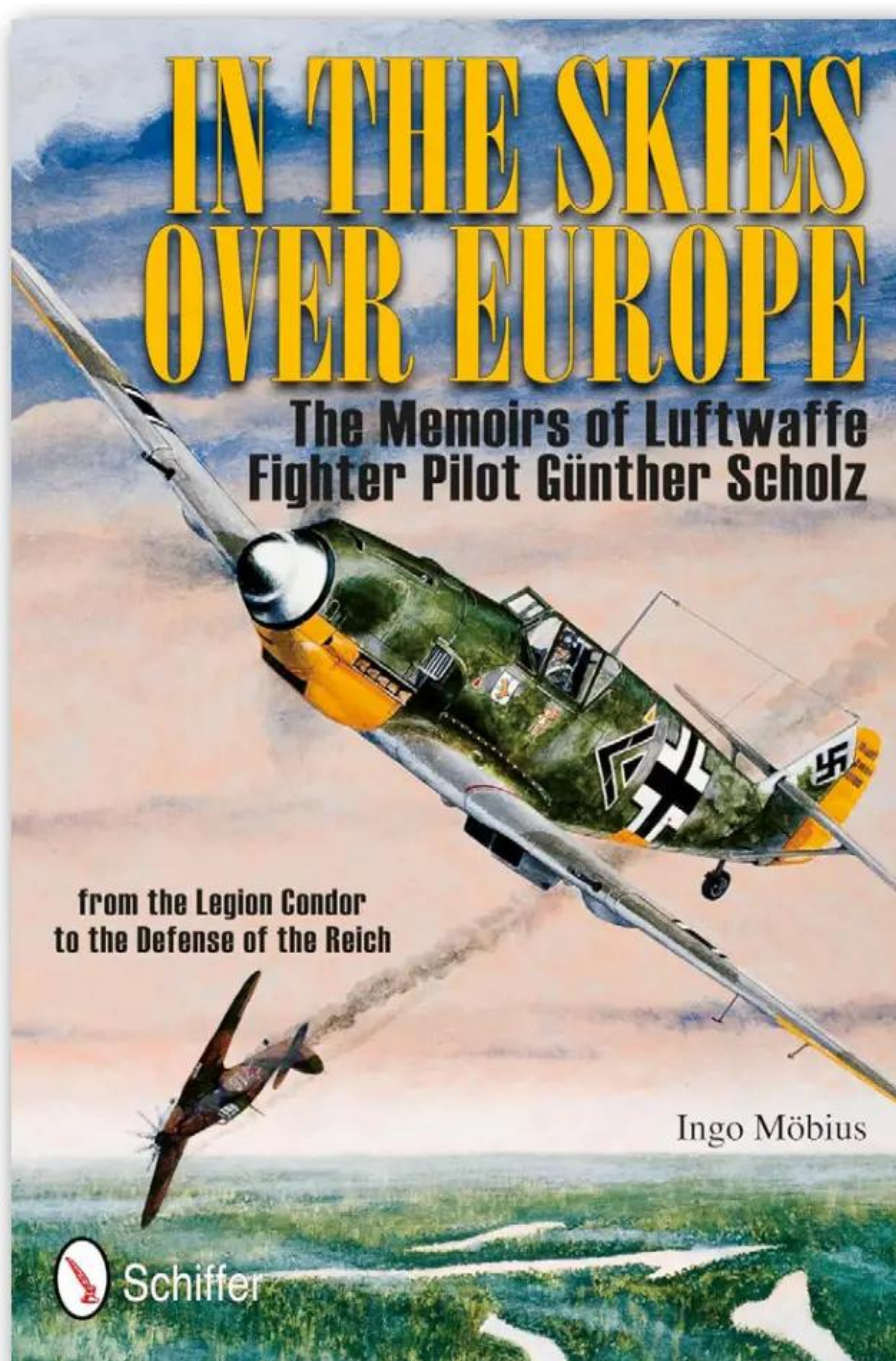


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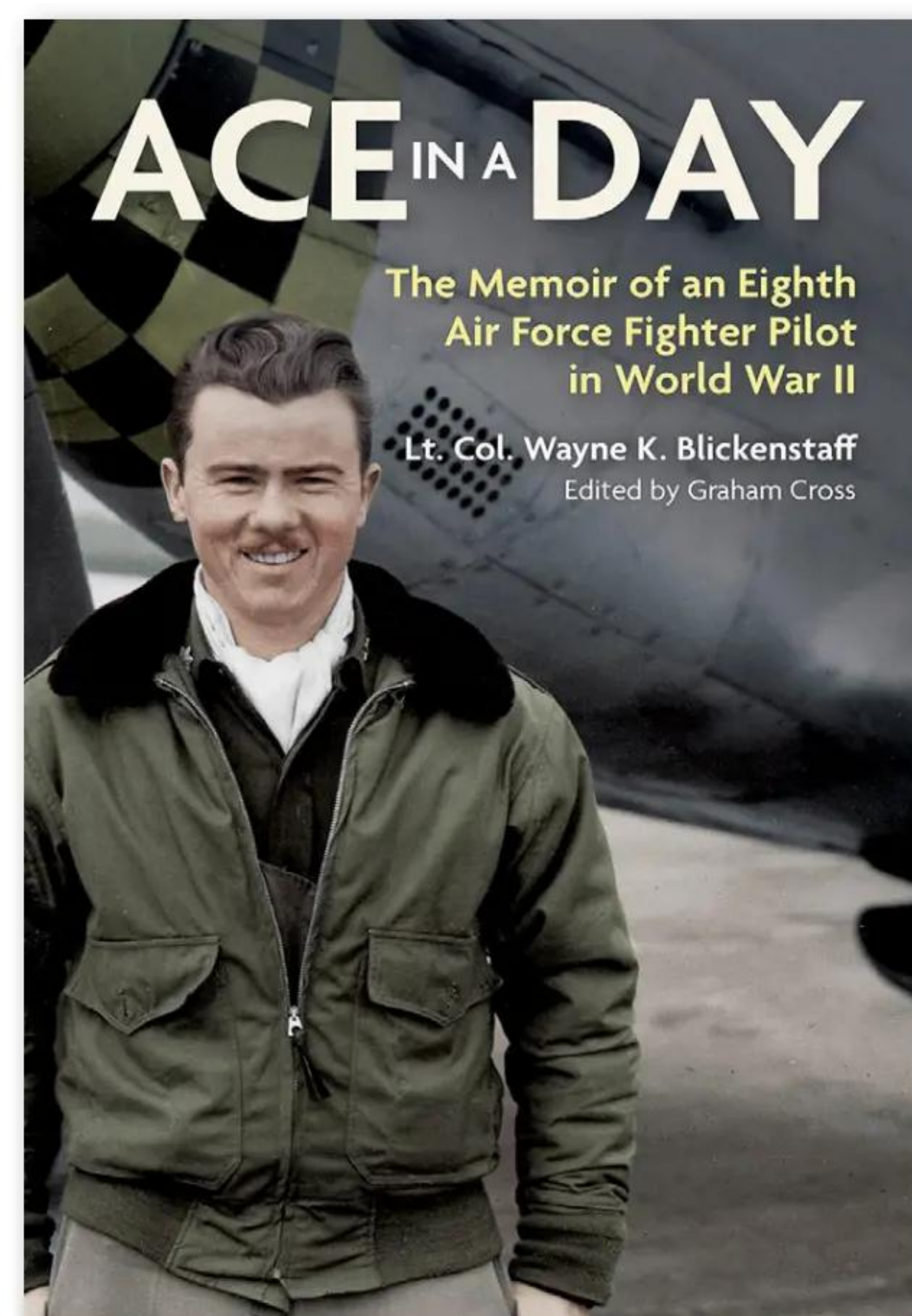
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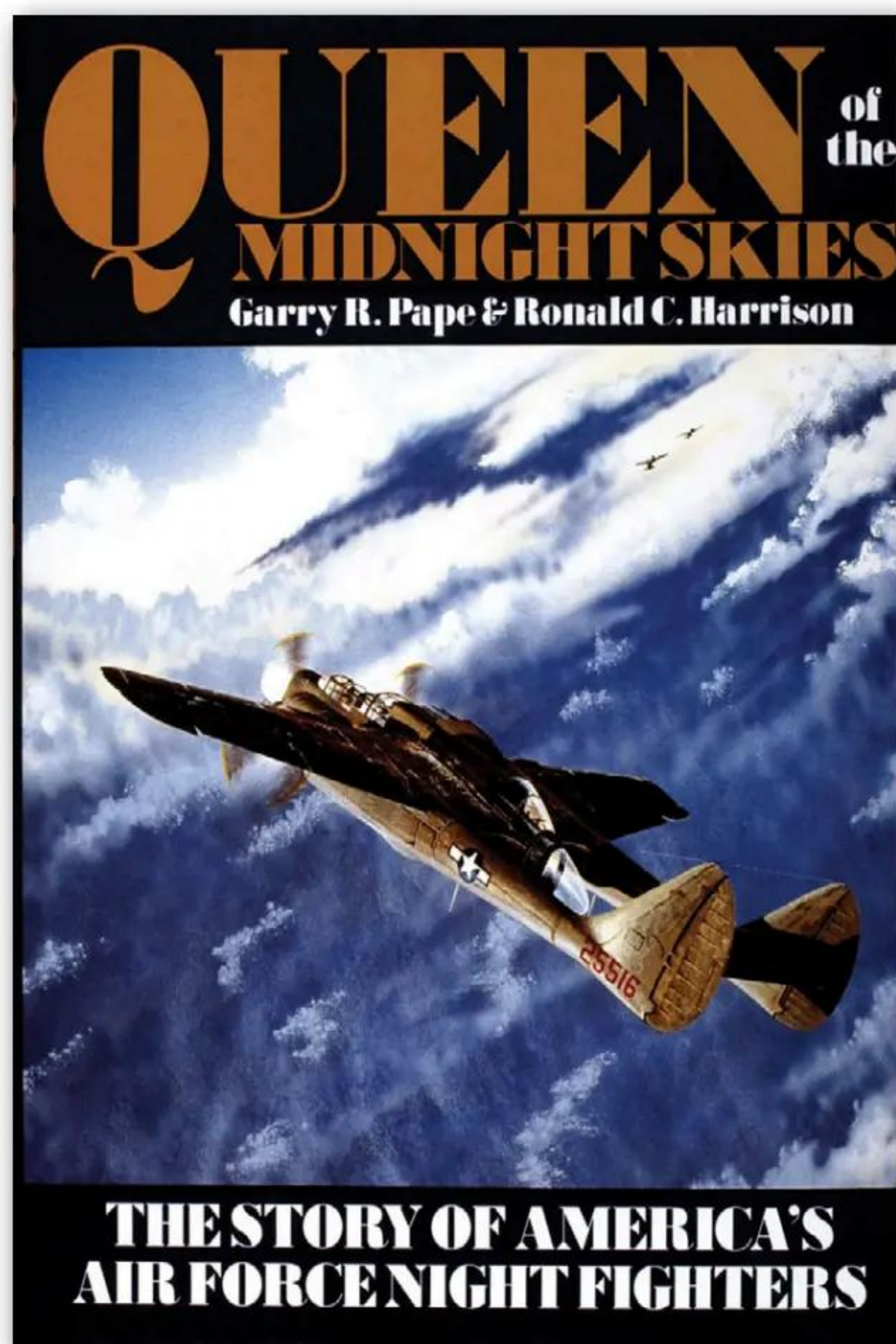
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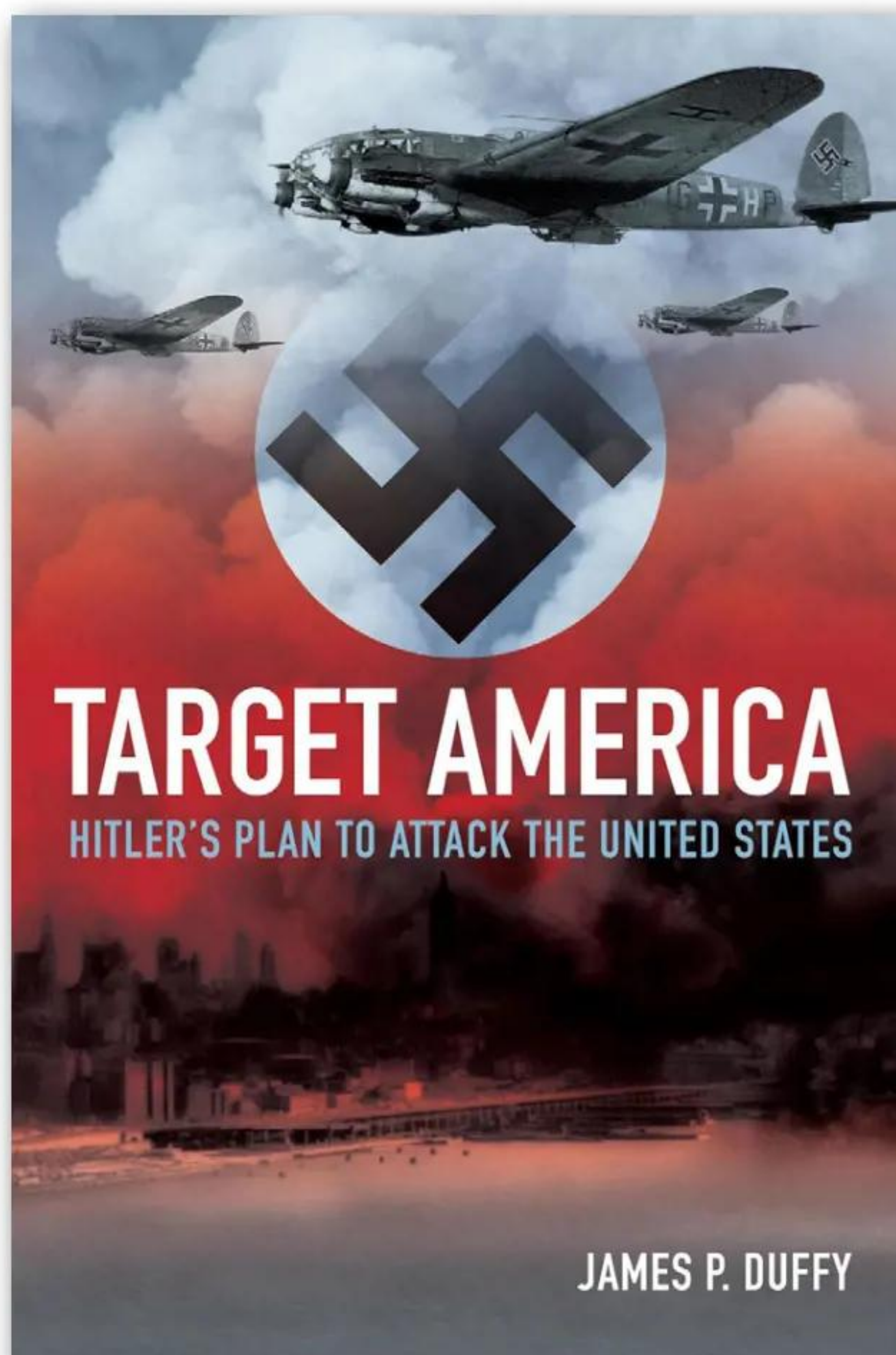
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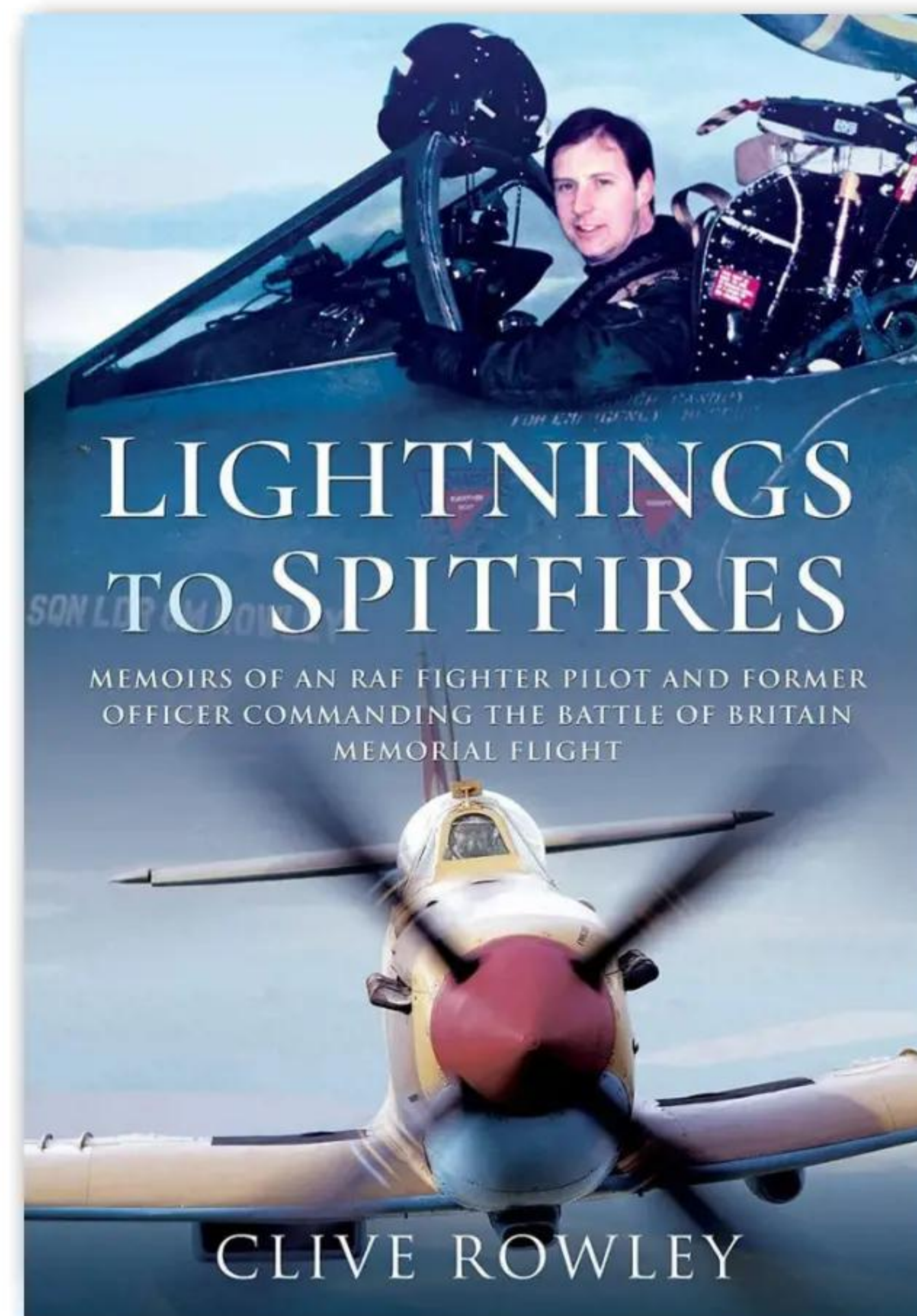
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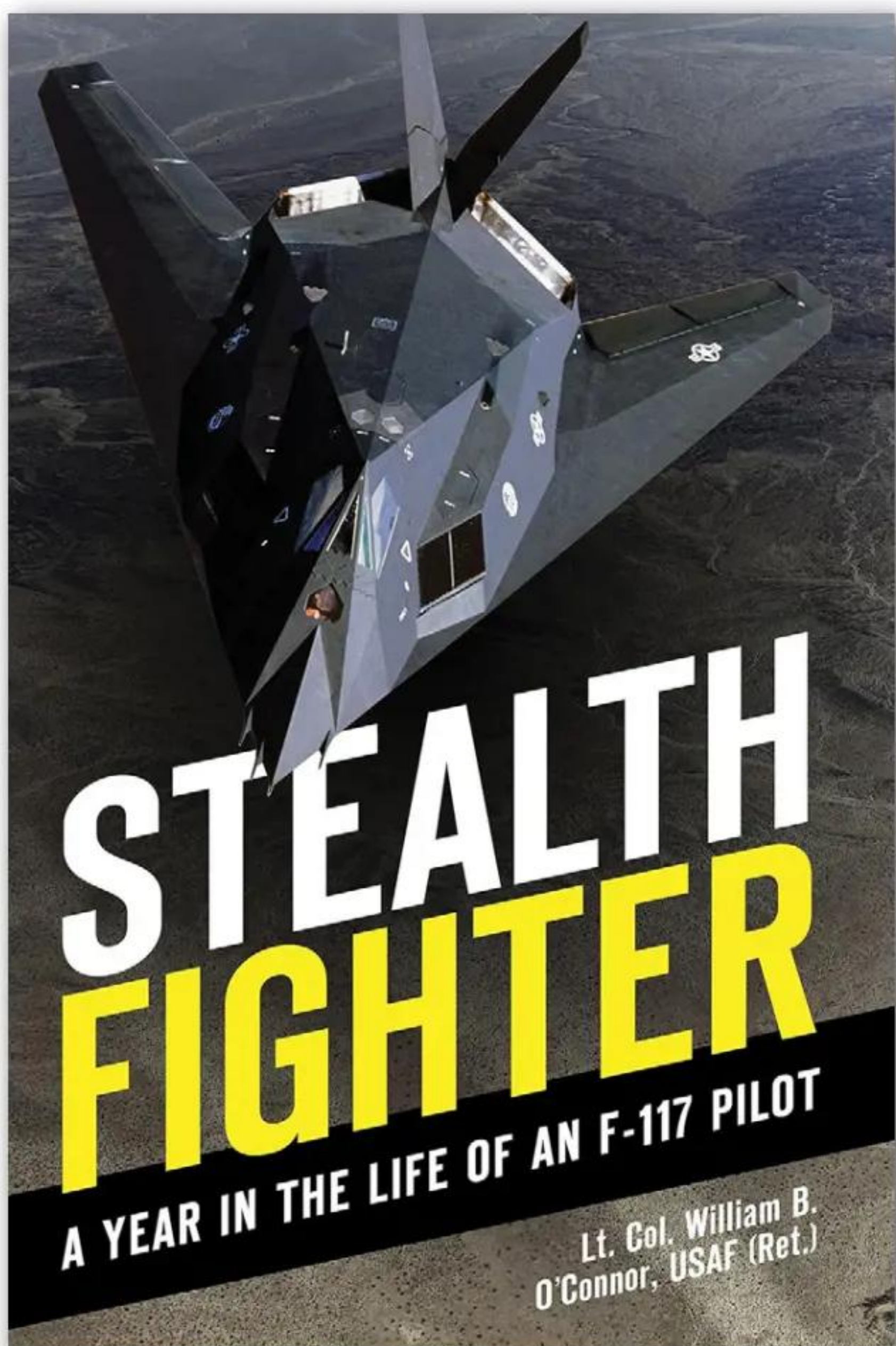
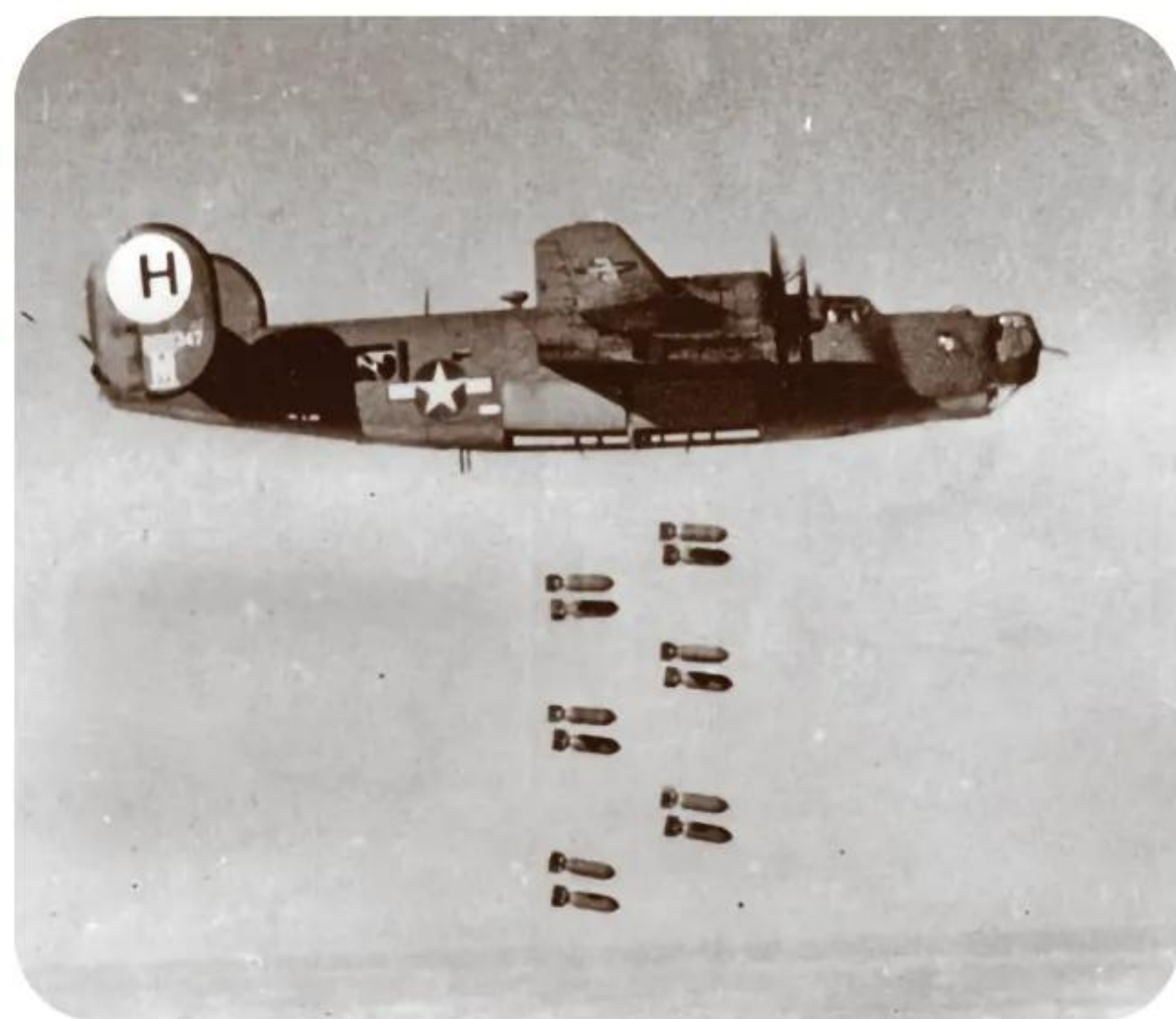
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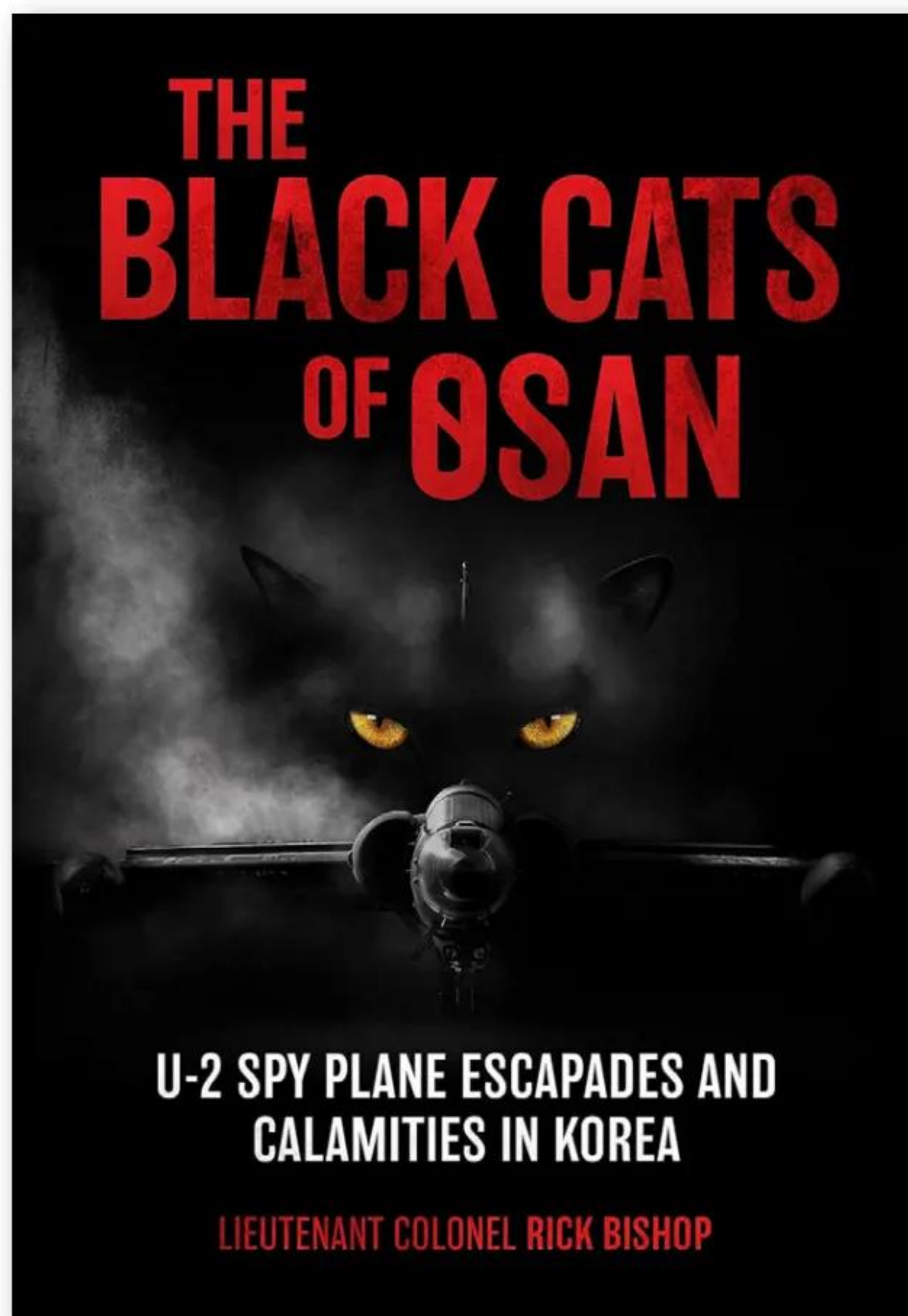
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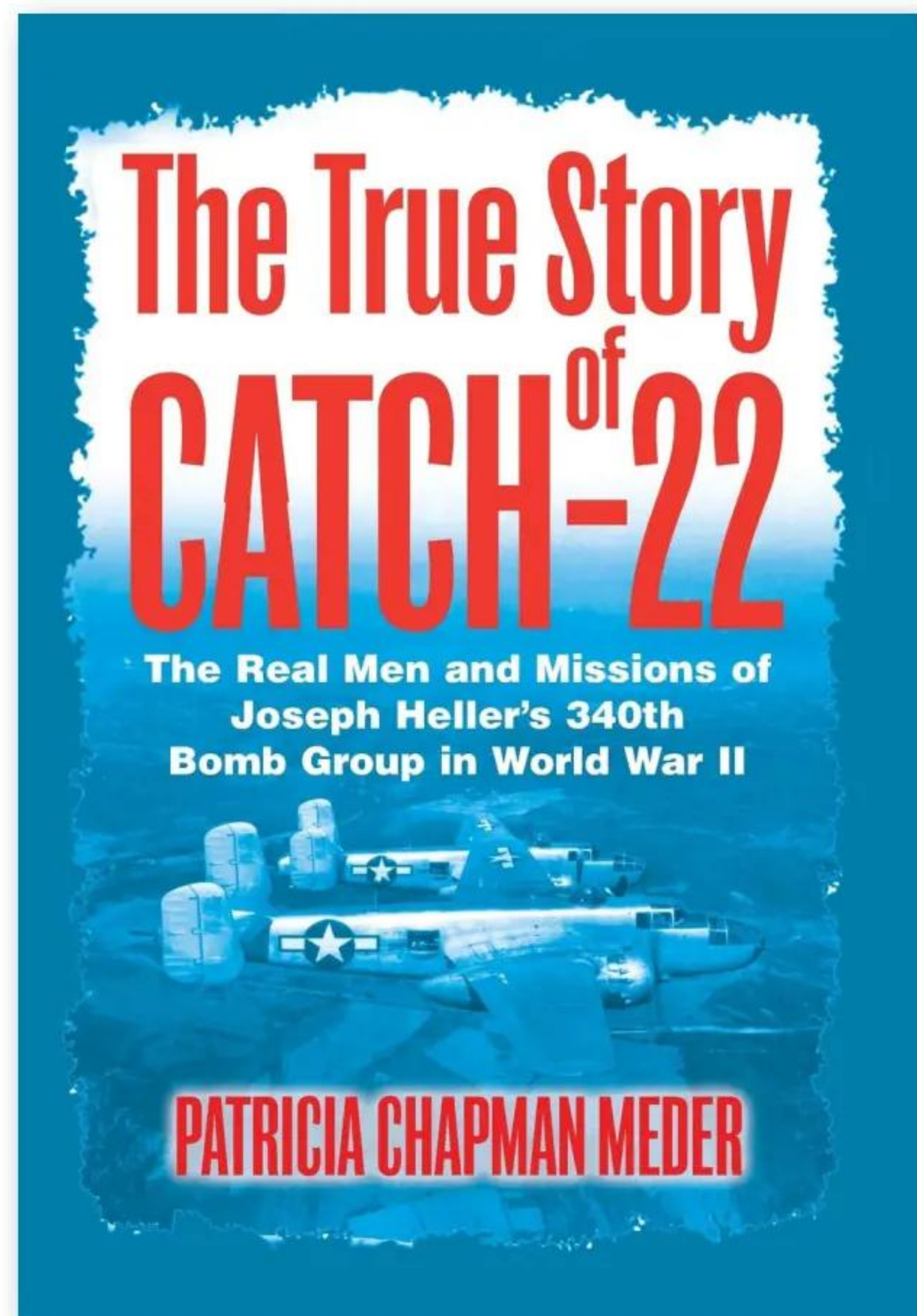
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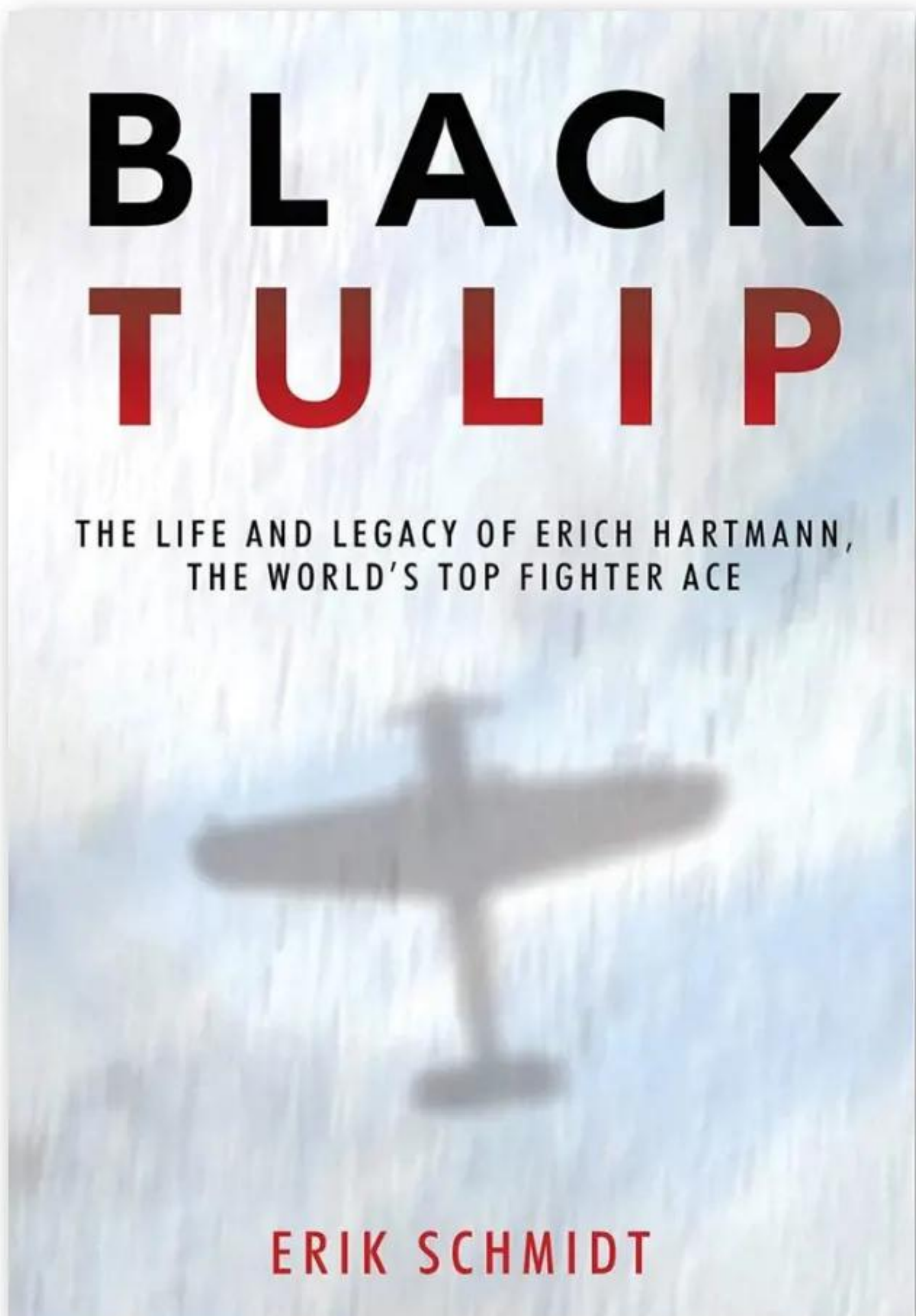
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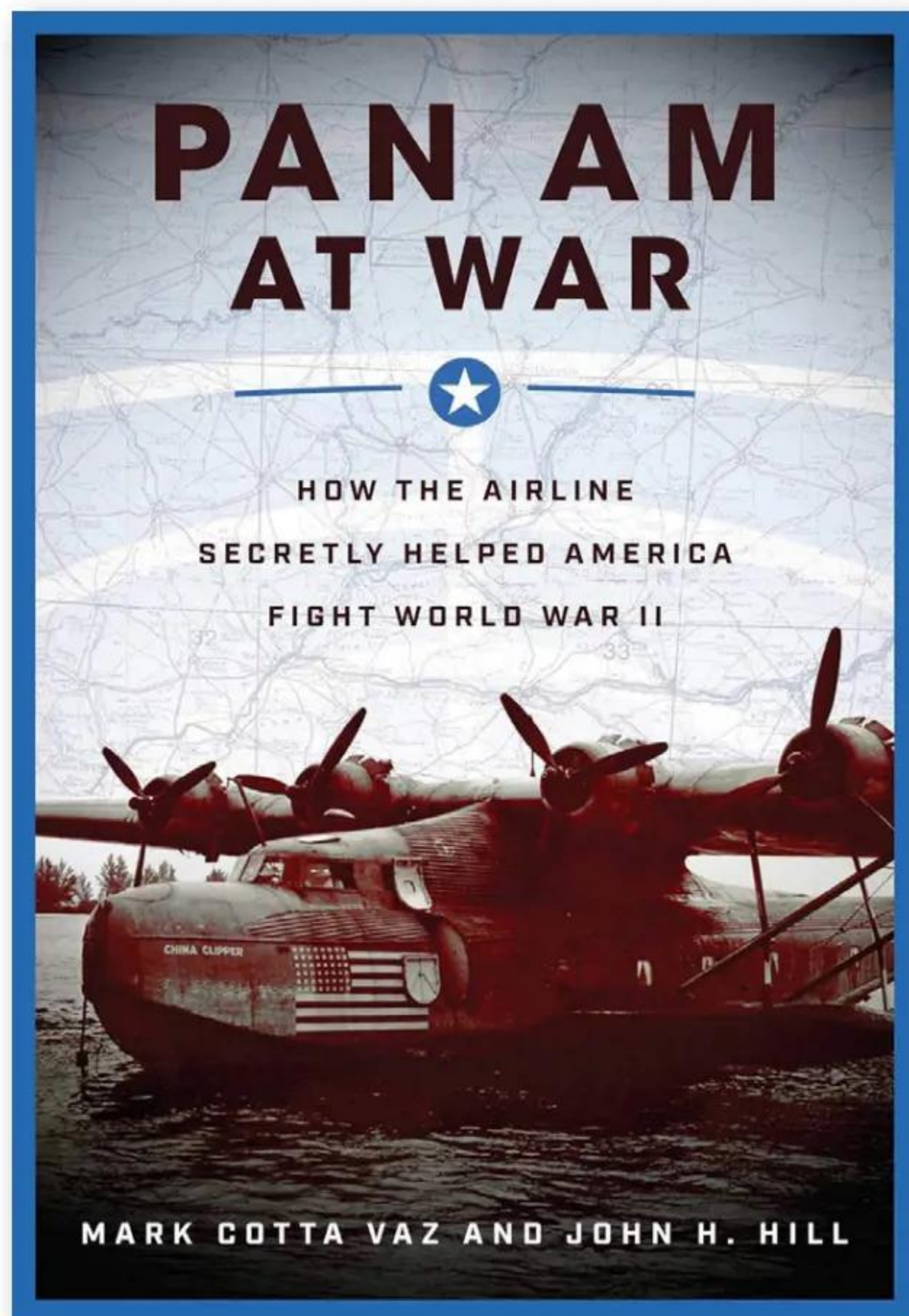
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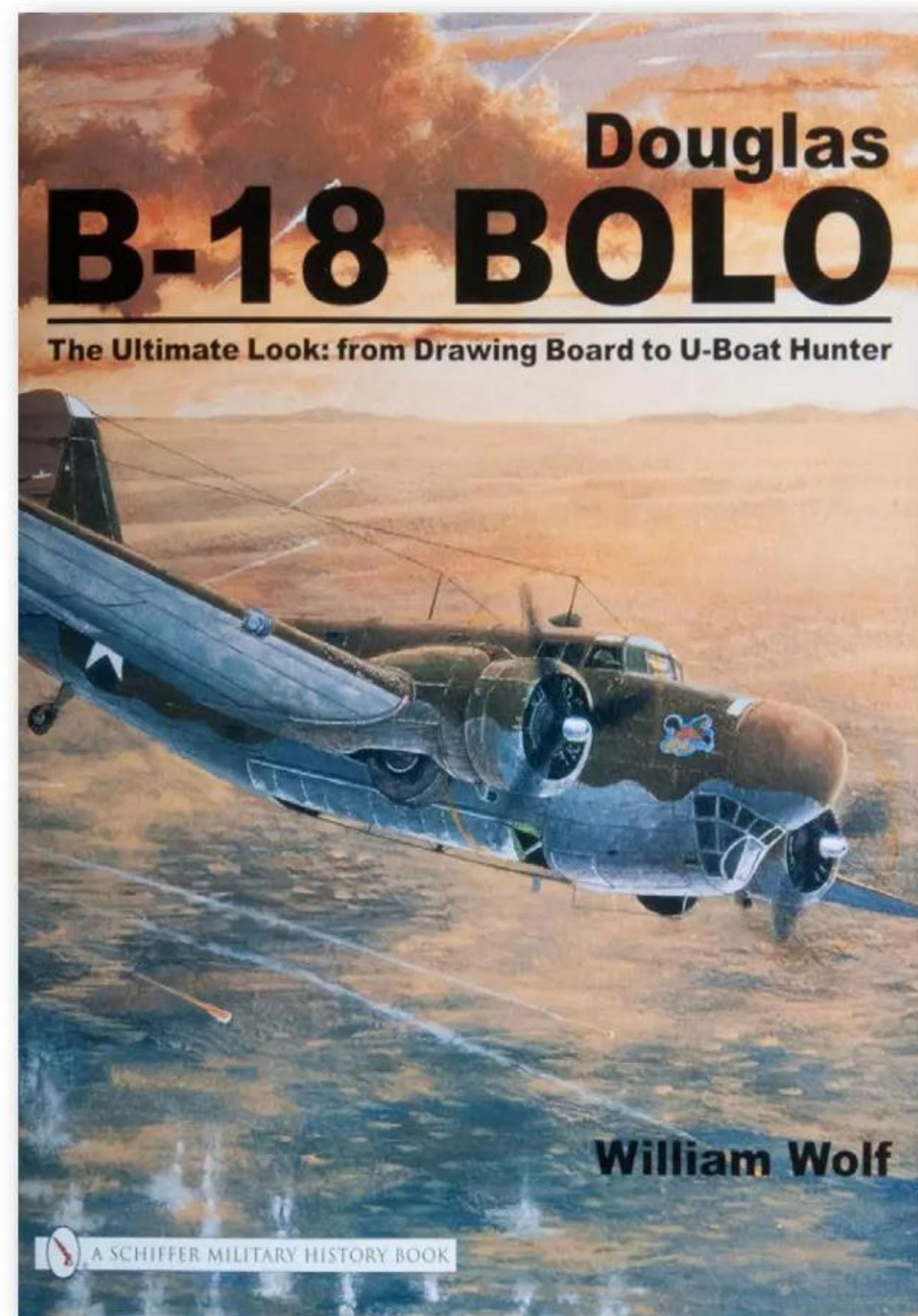
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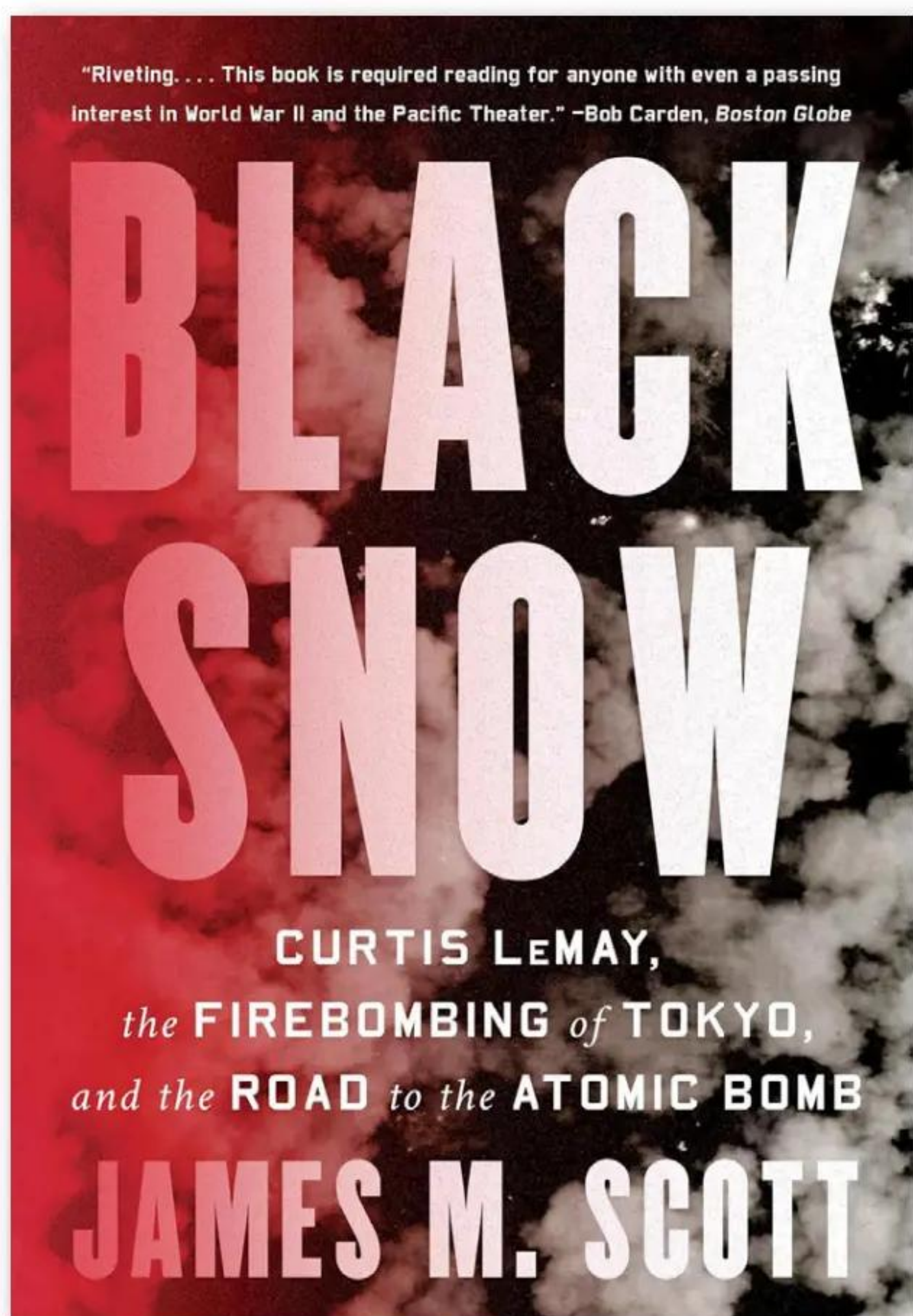
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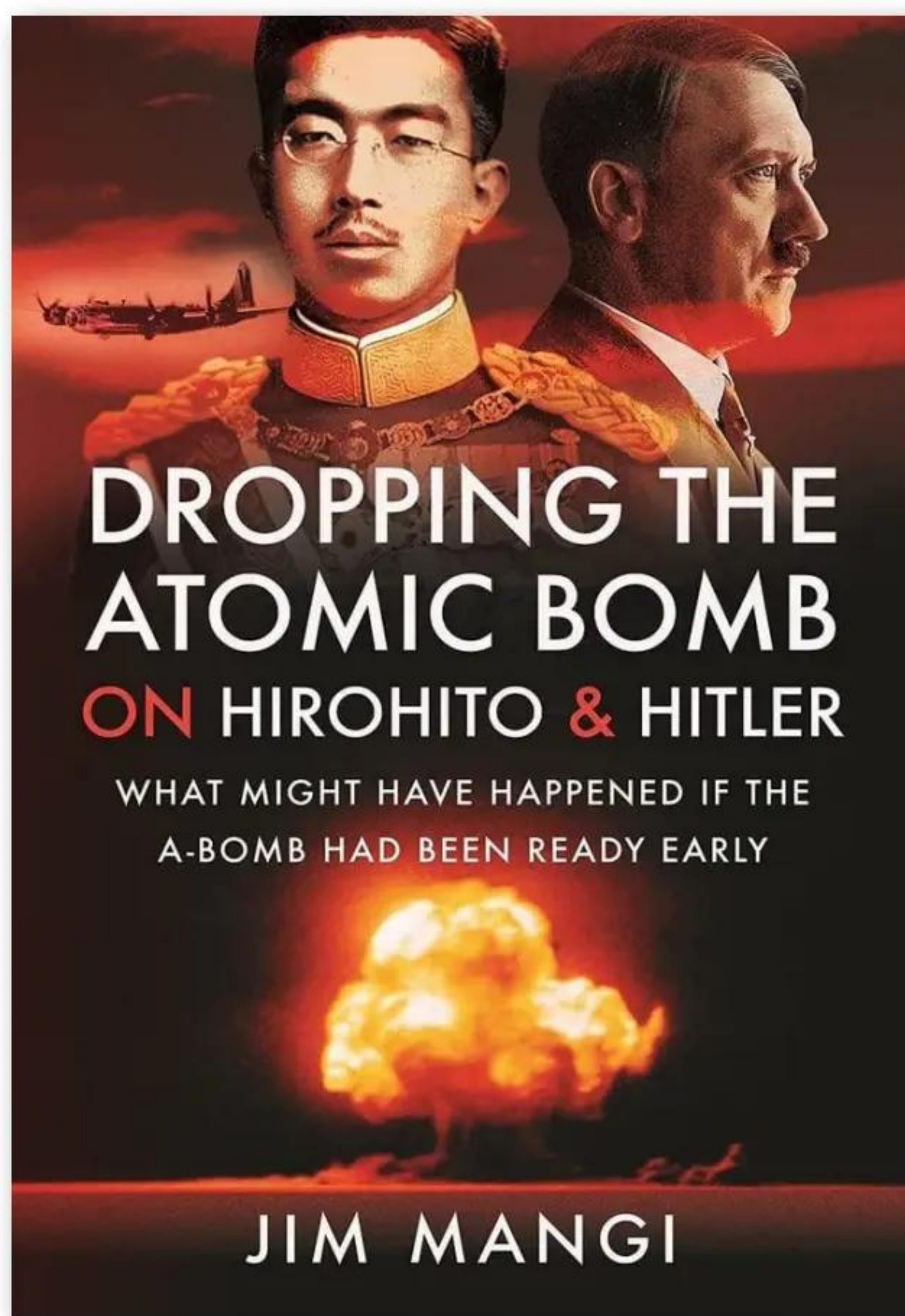
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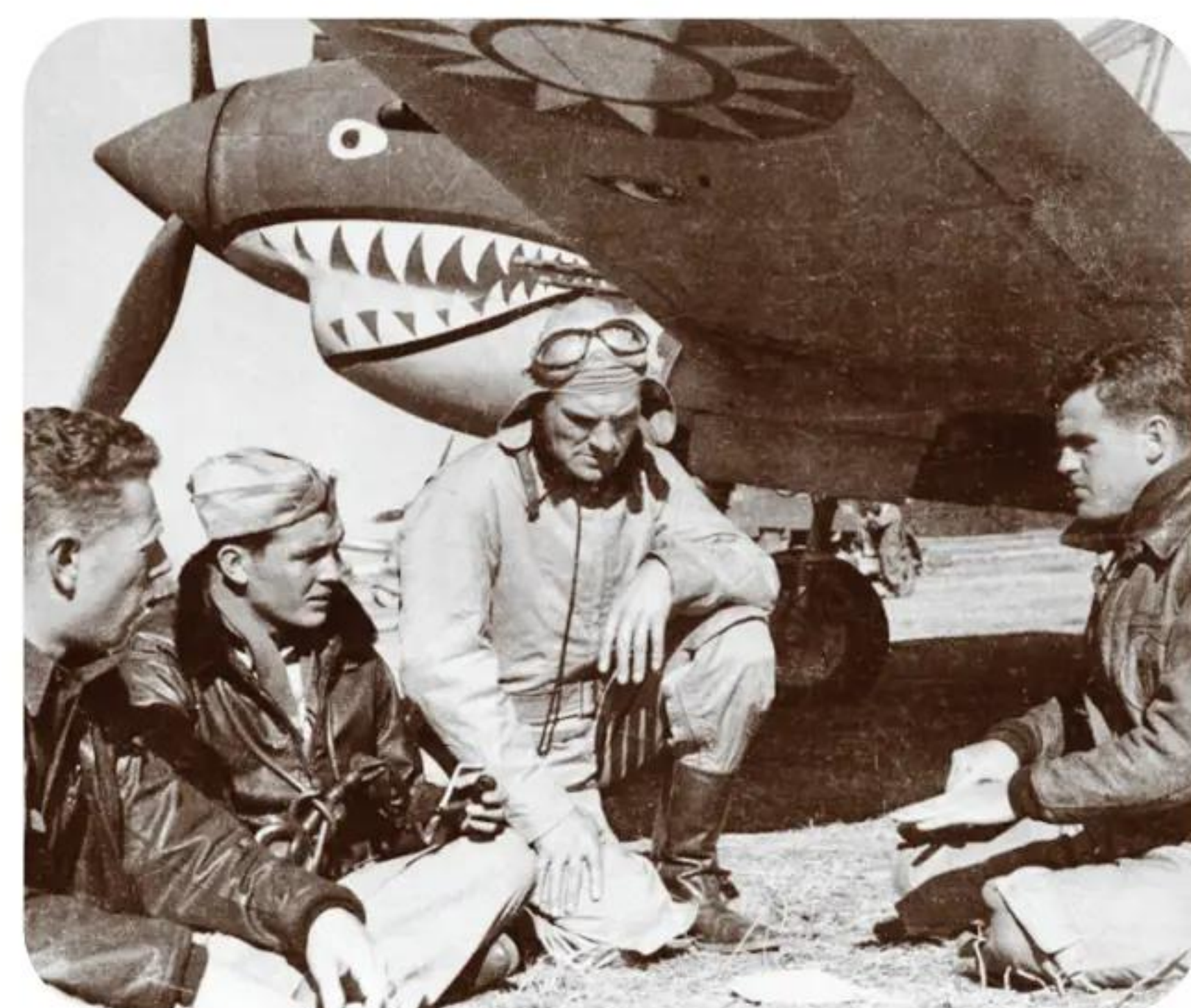
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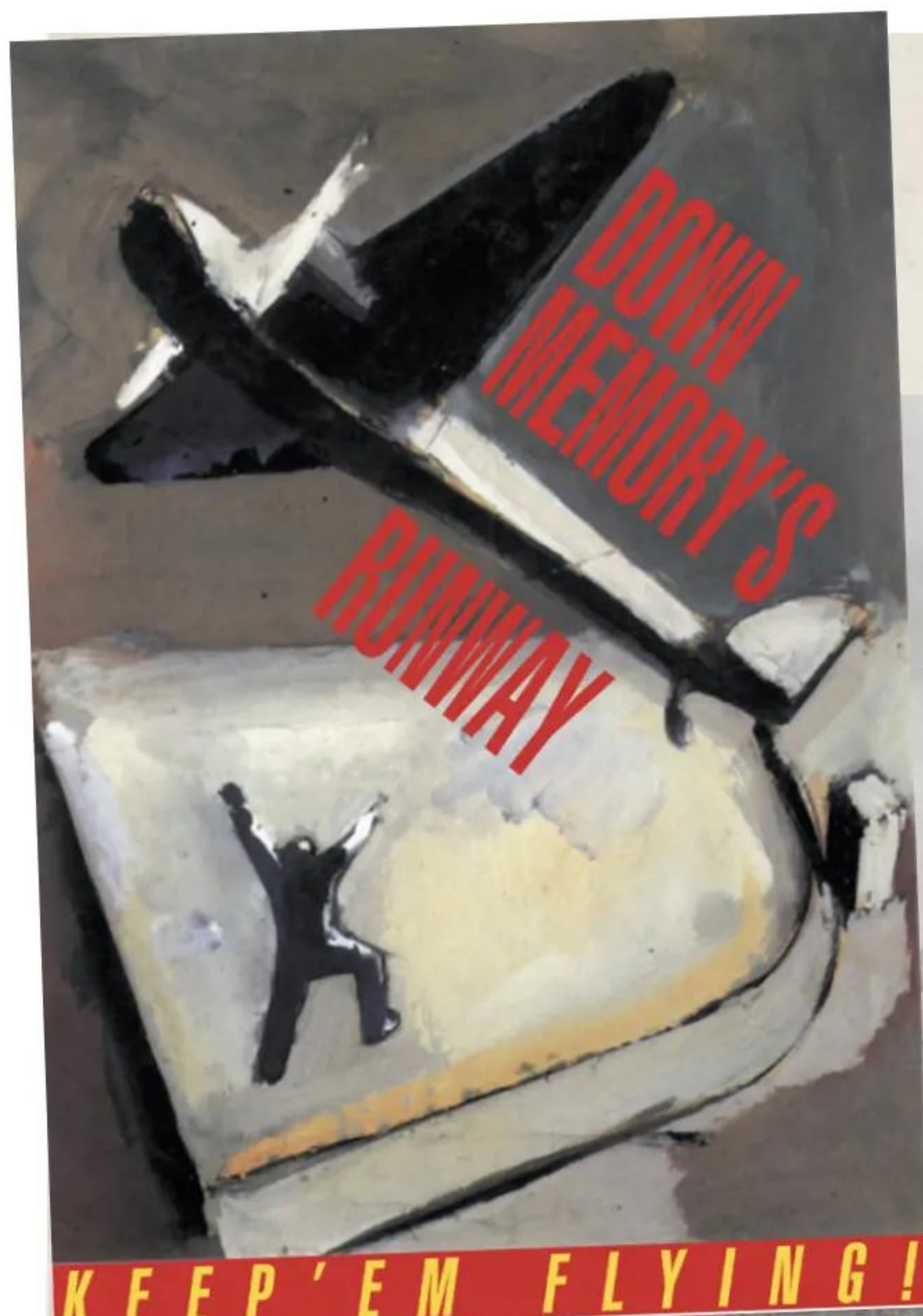
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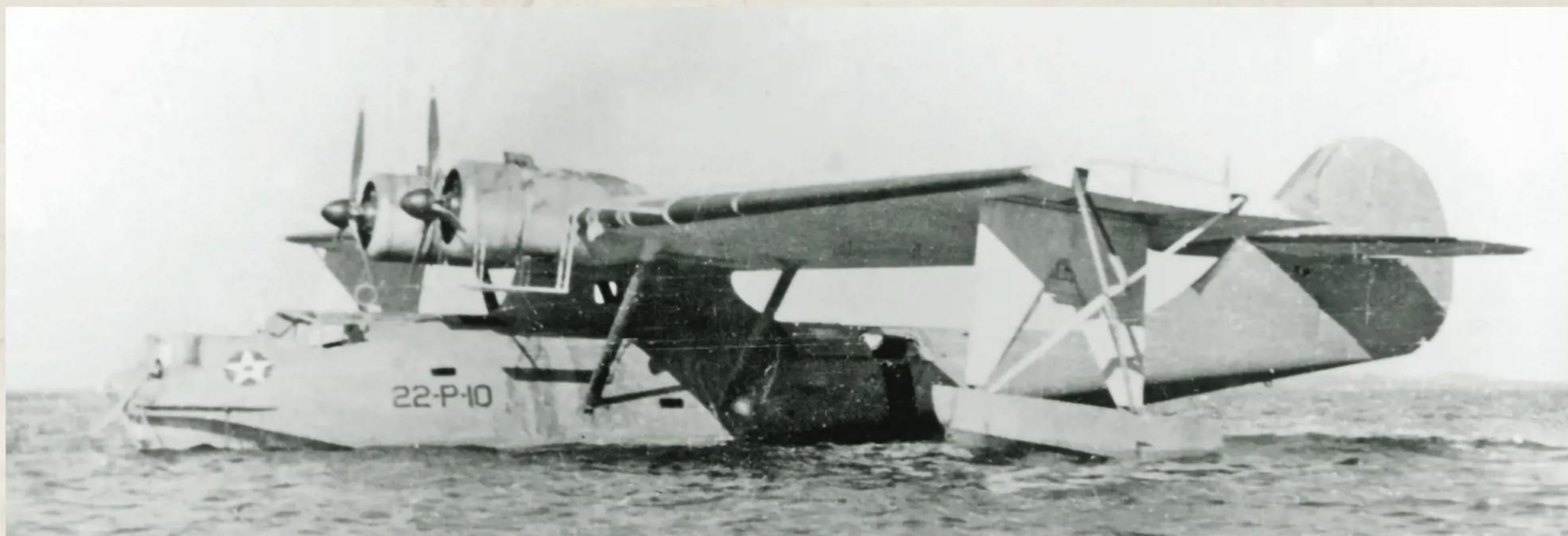
The Lockheed Model 18 Lodestar was a success for the Burbank company yet it did not come close to that scored by rival Douglas Aircraft with the DC-3/C-47 series. The Model 18 was fast but not as economical to operate as the Douglas product nor did it have the amazing versatility of the Gooney Bird. Yet, the Lodestar gave many airlines and air forces a very needed boost when it came to rapid transportation. Gleaming in natural metal finish with a red lightning bolt and New Zealand flag on the nose, this Lodestar flew with the Royal New Zealand Air Force as NZ3510 and was photographed at Whenuapai, New Zealand, on 12 November 1946. The plane had been used as a VIP transport and was sold surplus to that country's Civil Aviation Administration as ZK-ASK during 1949. However, the aircraft remained parked and was apparently not flown. With its condition going downhill, it was scrapped in 1951.



With the delivery of the Douglas C-54A Skymaster, the USAAF now had an efficient and modern four-engine transport with intercontinental abilities. Finished in Olive Drab and Neutral Gray camouflage with a large Air Transport Command insignia on the rear fuselage, USAAF 41-37288 was photographed at Whenuapai, New Zealand, during 1945 with a variety of other transports in the background and a flight of RNZAF PV-1 Venturas to the right. With the end of the war, this aircraft was transferred to the government of The Netherlands as NL-308. It then received the Dutch civil registration of PH-TAI before going to France in 1947 as F-BDRI. On 18 July 1951, the Skymaster was destroyed after taking off from Antananarivo-Andohahelo Airport in Madagascar and crashing into terrain during climb-out.



Hard-working Fairchild 71 series pioneered many bush routes in Canada while operating on either floats or land gear. Model 71C CF-AWX was fitted with floats when photographed during 1936 while operating off lake in Manitoba. The aircraft was destroyed when the supporting struts for the floats collapsed during landing on Deschambault Lake in Saskatchewan on 4 July 1943.



This Catalina illustrates America's precarious position during the early days of WWII. Consolidated PBY-5 BuNo 2301 22-P-10 of VP-22 was photographed at Darwin Harbor Seaplane Base during early January 1942. VP-22's original 22-P-10 (BuNo 0875) was destroyed at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. BuNo 2301 was also damaged in the same raid but was repaired. In the hope of stopping Japanese advances, VP-22 and BuNo 2301 flew to Darwin and then to Ambon Bay in the Dutch East Indies but came under immediate Japanese attack on 15 January 1942 and BuNo 2301 burned and sank at its moorings. VP-22's three surviving PBY-5s flew to Darwin and then to Perth. Most of the original personnel were returned to the USA and the unit disbanded.



A gloomy and wet day at Gimpo field near Seoul as RF-51D 44-84775 is prepared for another mission against communist forces. The photo recon Mustang was assigned to the 45th Tactical Recon Squadron (buzz code is RF rather than the FF for fighters). The 45th TRS was the only unit to exclusively operate the RF-51D during the Korean War.



The pioneering Kaman K-190 during a test flight at Windsor Locks, Connecticut, during October 1948. The K-190 was an improved variant of the earlier K-125 and it led to the further improved K-225 with a 225-hp engine. The K-225 was certified by the CAA and eleven were built as crop dusters.

AC



WRONG STAR

In the “Log Entries” article on Nevil Shute Norway, on Page 28 the photo show actress Glynis Johns, not Marlene Dietrich. Johns played the role of stewardess while Dietrich played the role of a passenger in the 1951 film *No Highway in the Sky*.

Mike Heideman
Via email



Just to make those readers happy who caught this mistake, here is a photo from the film of Glynis Johns, James Stewart, and Marlene Dietrich.



Nevil Shute (center) with the first production Airspeed AS.5 Courier. Shute had an interesting association with the company and was responsible for their high-performance designs.

NEVIL SHUTE

When I received the August issue of *Air Classics*, I was very pleased and actually surprised to find Mark Bingham’s “Log Entries” concerning Nevil Shute. I’ve always felt that Shute wrote some of the best fiction ever and that it is too bad not many folks these days have even heard his name. My early experience in reading Shute took place when I was in high school in the 1960s. I was always interested in airplanes, even as a young kid.

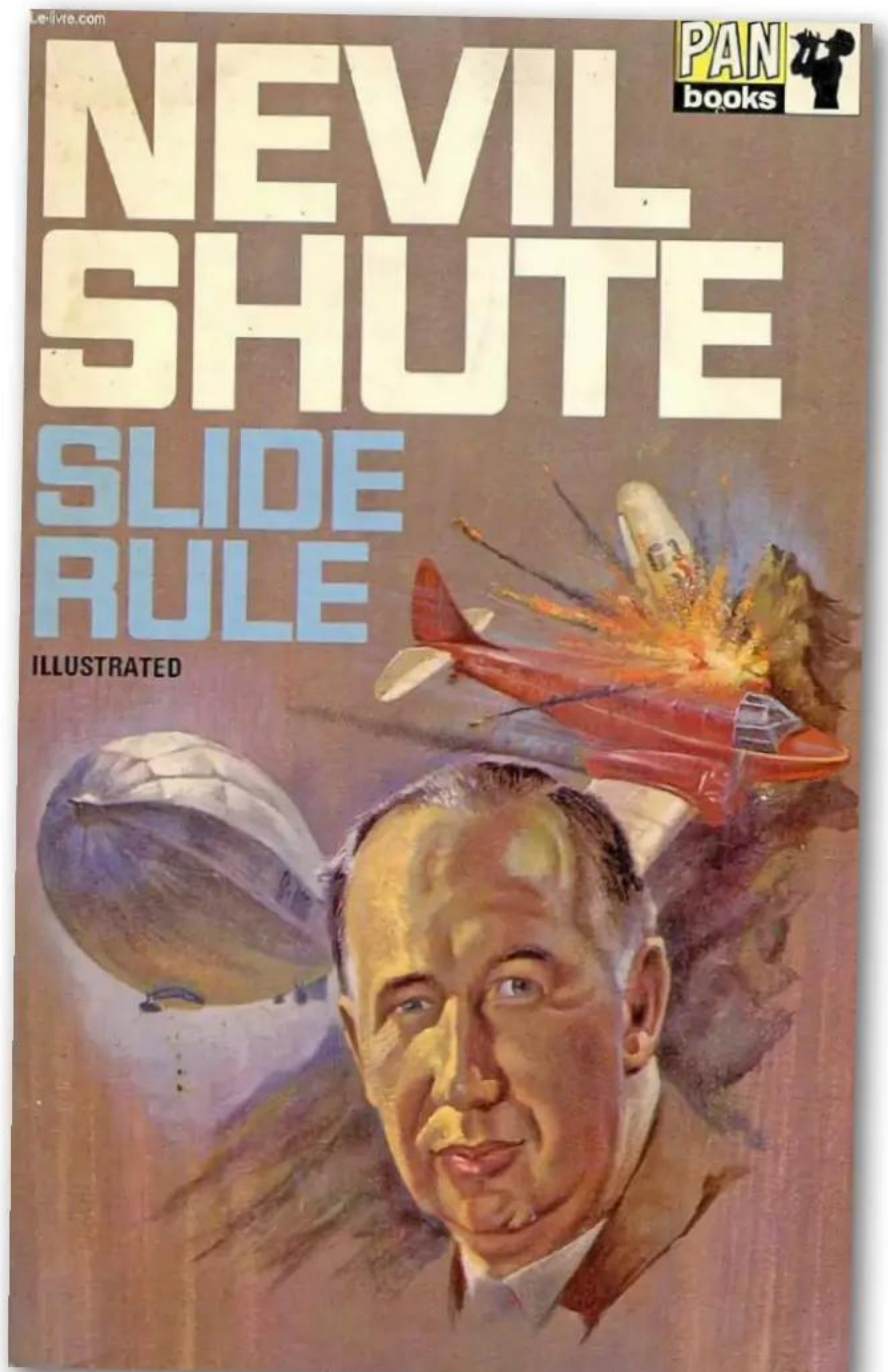
My first Shute book was *The Rainbow and the Rose*, which I must have learned

about in some aviation magazine. Since then, I have obtained copies of everything he wrote. That includes *The Seafarers*, which was published after his death. To this day, I often re-read a random example of his books for the simple enjoyment I get from experiencing his characters and how they live and interact. It’s kind of interesting that over the years I found a few professional aviation people who also knew of Shute’s books. One was an individual who ran an aircraft engine overhaul shop in Florida. I flew a club Cessna there to have its engine done and could not help seeing a

whole shelf of Shute’s books on one wall of his office.

In an entirely different venue, if you read Richard Drury’s fine book *My Secret War* (Drury was an air rescue pilot who flew A-1s in Vietnam), look carefully at the photo of his desk and you will see a couple of Shute books.

Shute was a well-traveled man. He also was an accomplished engineer, businessman, and military officer who was married to a medical doctor. He



Nevil Shute wrote *Slide Rule*, which is an autobiography and it has lots of emphasis on the aviation side of his life.



When the relatively intact Hamp Q-102 was discovered at Buna, it was decided to ship the plane to Australia.

wove together plots, people, and places in a knowledgeable way that never fails to please the reader. As far as I can recall, except in his very early works, he never created an “evil” character. Even then he later apologized for anything like that, blaming it on his early efforts at “learning the trade.” I think you can still find most of Shute’s books quite easily online or perhaps at a local bookstore.

Fulton Cook

Via email

EDITOR’S NOTE: Years ago, I read several Shute books and quite enjoyed them. They are pretty much different from anything else. After reading Mark’s article, I went to our local used bookstore and found several others that I had not read. They hold up quite well. Shute was a very interesting character and his books are certainly worth considering today.

CAPTURED HAMP

Bravo on the excellent article on the restored Hamp. Several other Hamps were captured and returned to the United States and Australia for examination/testing. During the early part of the war, there was a real rush to examine captured Japanese airframes to see what could be learned from them and how tactics could be developed to counter the enemy planes. I am attempting to compile photos of captured Japanese aircraft of all types and am including a few shots of Hamp Q-102 captured during 1943 on Buna that readers might enjoy.

Bob Raymond
Pasadena, CA



As can be seen, Hamp Q-102 was in good overall condition.



Soldiers get some shade under the wing of Hamp Q-102 prior to taking the fighter apart.

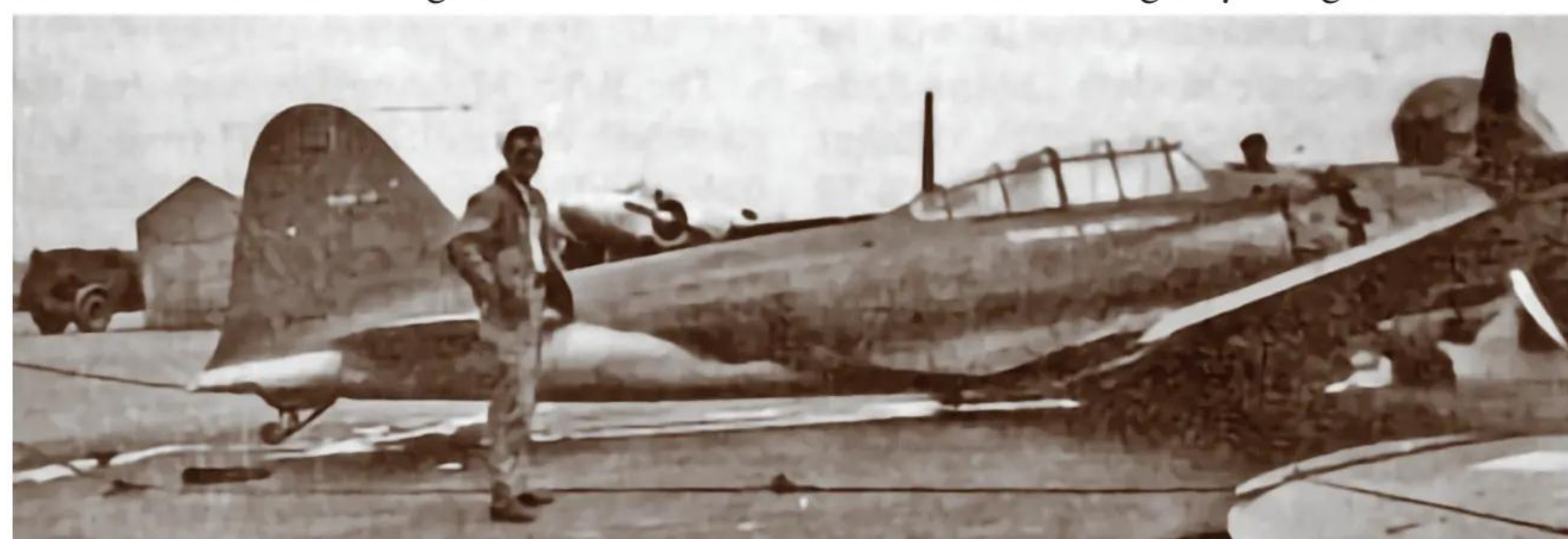
ATLANTA ZERO

I think it is just great that the Hamp is now flying and I really enjoyed the long article in the September issue along with the updates on the other flying Zeros. This led me to do some thinking. One of the first issues of *Air Classics* that I read concerned the “Atlanta Zero” — the damaged airframe that was displayed next to an antique store in Atlanta, Georgia. I was a

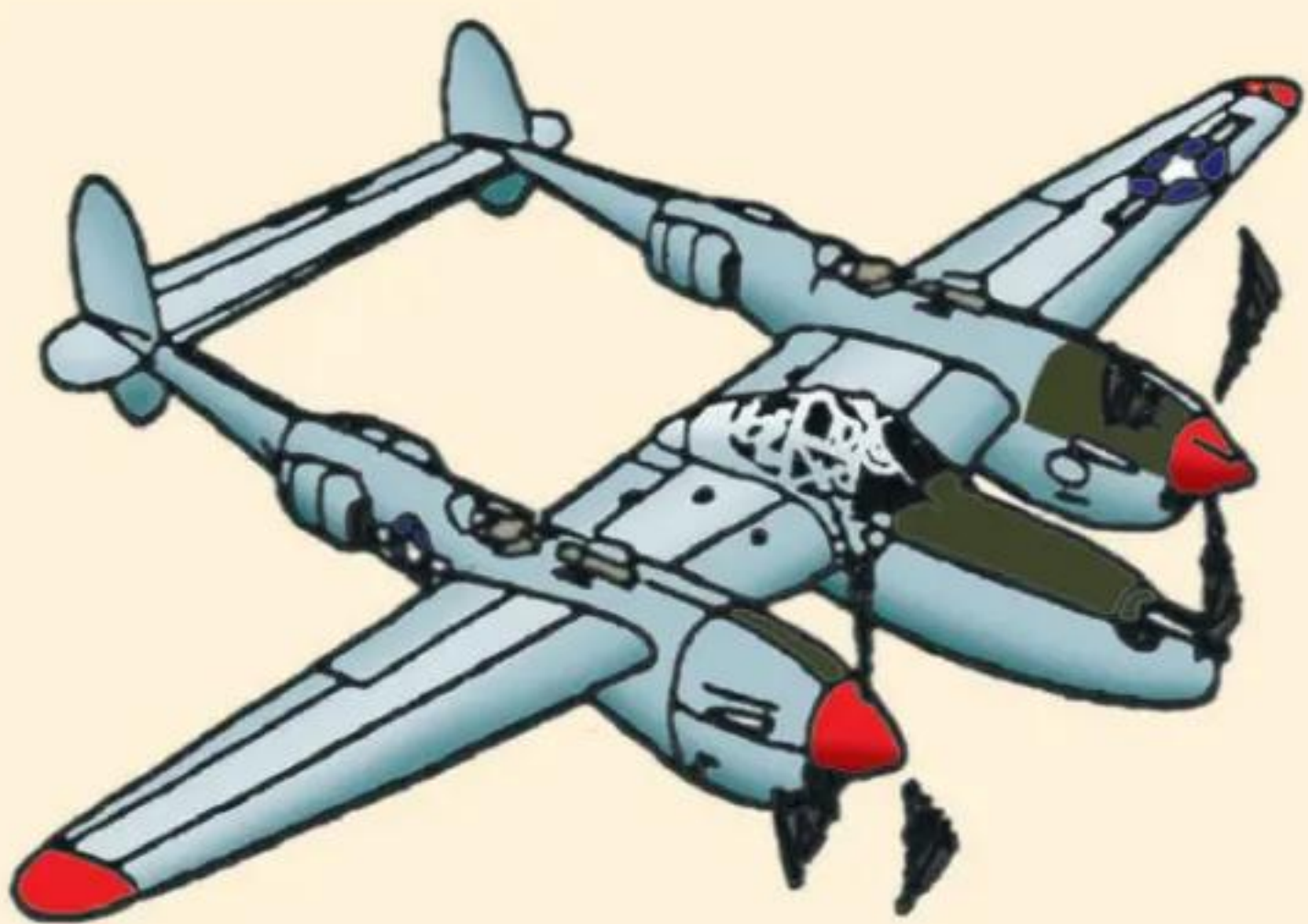


Disassembling Hamp Q-102 for transport to Australia.

teenager at the time and I thought it was pretty amazing that a relatively intact Zero was basically dumped in the open in a major population center and no one was doing anything with it. Of



The Atlanta Zero after its ground loop incident at NAS Atlanta during 1945. The plane was later sold for scrap.



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SE HABLA ESPAÑOL



The Zero on display at the antiques store. As can be seen, there was no effort to preserve the plane and it was presented more as a curiosity than anything else. Note the various parts scattered on the dirt.

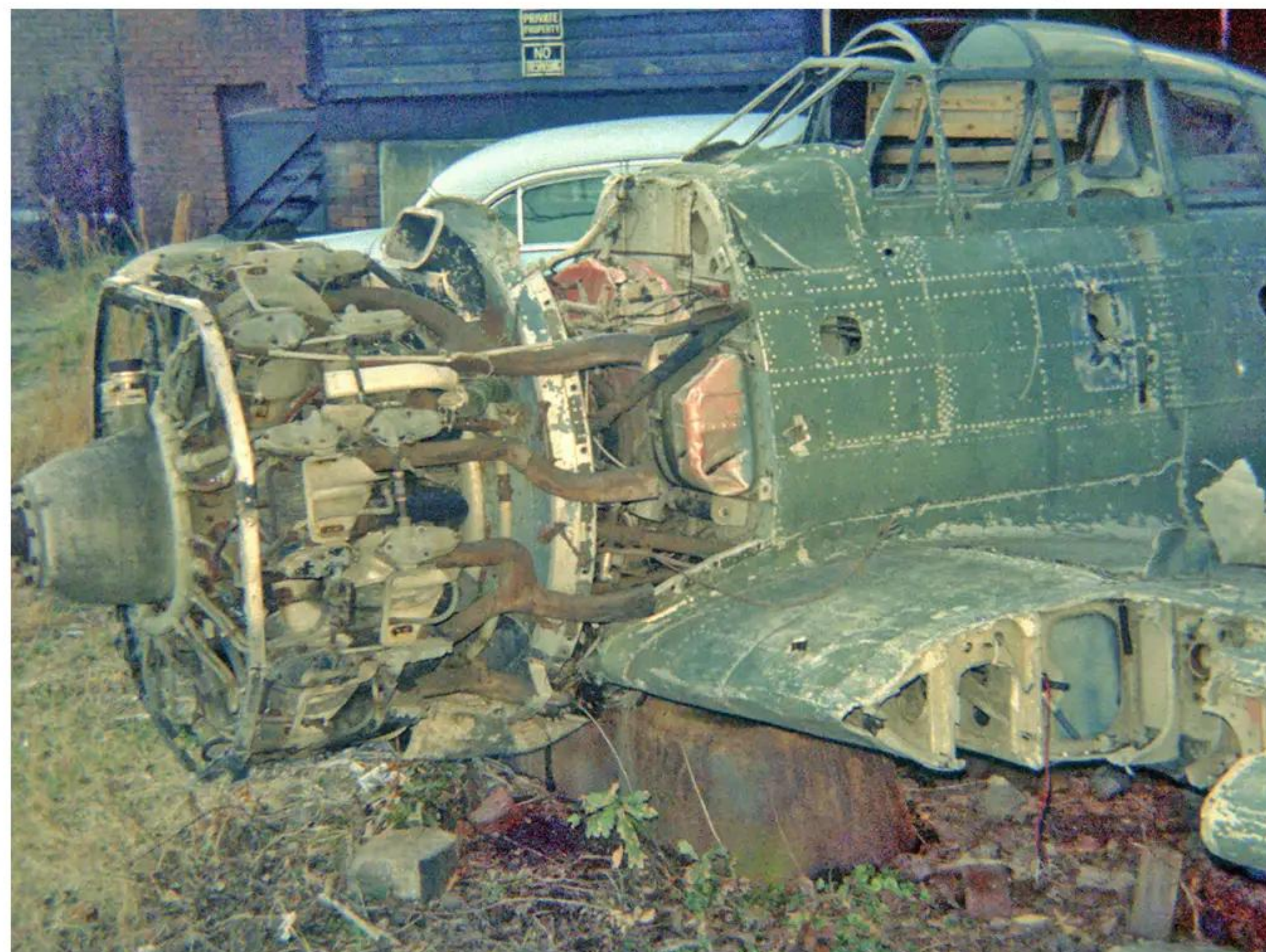
course, I did not have the sophistication at the time to realize what rebuilding the Zero would cost! I am attaching some photos of how the aircraft looked back in the 1970s.

Then, we have to fast forward decades later to *Air Classics* illustrating Paul Allen's Zero projects. Through Jim Larsen's fine photographs, we learned that Mr. Allen had purchased the Atlanta Zero. After his untimely death, I saw that Platinum had the plane for sale.

However, I never learned what happened to the aircraft. Can *Air Classics* shed some light on the current status of the "Atlanta Zero?"

Ray Wallingford
Via email

EDITOR'S NOTE: This captured Zero was returned to airworthy status during the war and flown around the country, being used to raise War Bond funds. However, an unfortunate ground loop at NAS Atlanta put an end to the Zero's flying career. It was eventually sold as scrap but found a new home at a ramshackle antiques store that had all sorts of unusual items on display. As interest in buying and restoring WWII aircraft grew, the owner of the store was besieged with requests on buying the plane — most at extremely low prices. After the owner passed, the family sold the aircraft to Don Whittington and it eventually went to Paul Allen for his growing collection of Zero airframes and parts. At the time, Mr. Allen apparently had the engine inspected and was told it could be restored to airworthy condition. As we all know, the Planes of Fame Zero is the only one with



When it was photographed in 1978, the Atlanta Zero, even though in terrible condition, was one of the best surviving examples.



The wing had been hacked open to remove the armament.

an original powerplant so this revelation was very important to Mr. Allen because he wanted to have a flying Zero powered by a Sakae radial. However, with his passing a number of his “project” aircraft were put up for sale with Platinum. The Atlanta Zero was purchased by a Russian WWII enthusiast and we understand the airframe is in disassembled storage in an East Coast warehouse. At this point, no work has been done on the plane but

it certainly is an exciting project and one that could conceivably fly with its original engine. Ray Wallingford provided some snapshots of the Zero “back in the day” and we can only imagine the reaction today if one found a similar aircraft sitting semi-abandoned in a major American city.

KING NINE WILL NOT RETURN

I am a long-time subscriber to both *Air Classics* and *Sea Classics*. However, this is my first time writing to the magazine. I wanted to thank you for the articles regarding B-25s in the June 2025 issue. I thought I was going to provide some new and unknown information about a B-25 that had been on a recently-watched

episode of the *Twilight Zone* but, after reading the article further, I saw where you had already mentioned it in one of the captions. So much for my scoop! I do have a couple of comments regarding some of the details that I noticed in that



Actor Robert Cummings with the Mitchell King Nine.

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episode. Made in 1960, it was the first episode of Season Two and was titled *King Nine Will Not Return*. I noticed the right propeller had been feathered prior to the “belly landing” and that the serial was painted as 42-32359 and not 42-32354 as mentioned (EDITOR’S NOTE: Our mistake). I do not know where the episode was filmed but I would encourage readers to watch it because it shows the Mitchell in great detail, both external and internal.

I have a certain fondness for the Mitchell since my dad was a bombardier/navigator on them during WWII and flew all over the South Pacific and some in Southeast Asia. He never did talk much about the war. It is unfortunate that the current generation has little to no appreciation for what those 19-year-olds of my father’s generation accomplished when they flew from Sacramento, California, to Wheeler Field, Pearl Harbor, and getting in trouble for flying over Diamond Head (a big no-no at the time) because they had less than ten minutes of fuel left.

David A. Westlake
LaConner, WA

EDITOR’S NOTE: *King Nine Will Not Return* was truly one of the classic episodes of the *Twilight Zone* and remains very popular today. The next issue of *Air Classics* will have some very exciting and exclusive news about *King Nine* along with a number of photographs so make sure you get the October edition.

BATTLE OVER HUNGARY

While reading Steve Blake’s excellent article “Battle Over Hungary” in the July issue, I did a double-take when I saw a photo of the 96th Fighter Squadron patch on Page 68. The patch is nearly identical to the patch of the 96th Flying Training Squadron (FTS) that operated at Williams AFB, Arizona, until the base ceased operations in 1992. (For those unfamiliar, Willie was located a bit east of Chandler and south of Mesa, both now suburbs of Phoenix. The former base is now called Mesa Gateway Airport and is a part of Mesa.) I was an Instructor Pilot in the 96th FTS from August 1978 through



Patch for the 96th FTS. (J. Schoen)

March 1983 and have attached a photo of our squadron patch (good thing I saved one of them).

The images in our squadron patch made sense to me back in the day. The prominently featured boxing bunny was, I presumed all those decades ago, based on the common Jackrabbit that is prevalent in the Arizona deserts. Similarly, the Saguaro Cactus is plentiful in the same deserts. But why images of a Jackrabbit and a Saguaro Cactus were chosen for a Fighter Squadron based in Italy, I guess I’ll never know!

It is probably no coincidence that the patches for both squadrons were identical. As late as the early 1970s — and possibly into the mid-1970s — the 96th FTS had a different, four-digit numerical designation. Unfortunately, I don’t know what the squadron number was or when the numerical designation changed. What I do know is that, by the time I arrived at Willie in July 1977 the squadron number had been changed to 96th FTS. Presumably, the powers that be wanted to honor the legacy of the 96th FS and, thus, selected the patch of the 96th FS for the new 96th FTS. Can you imagine how giddy the powers that be must have been when they realized how applicable the old patch was to the new and renumbered squadron?

Jeff Schoen
Chandler, AZ

AC



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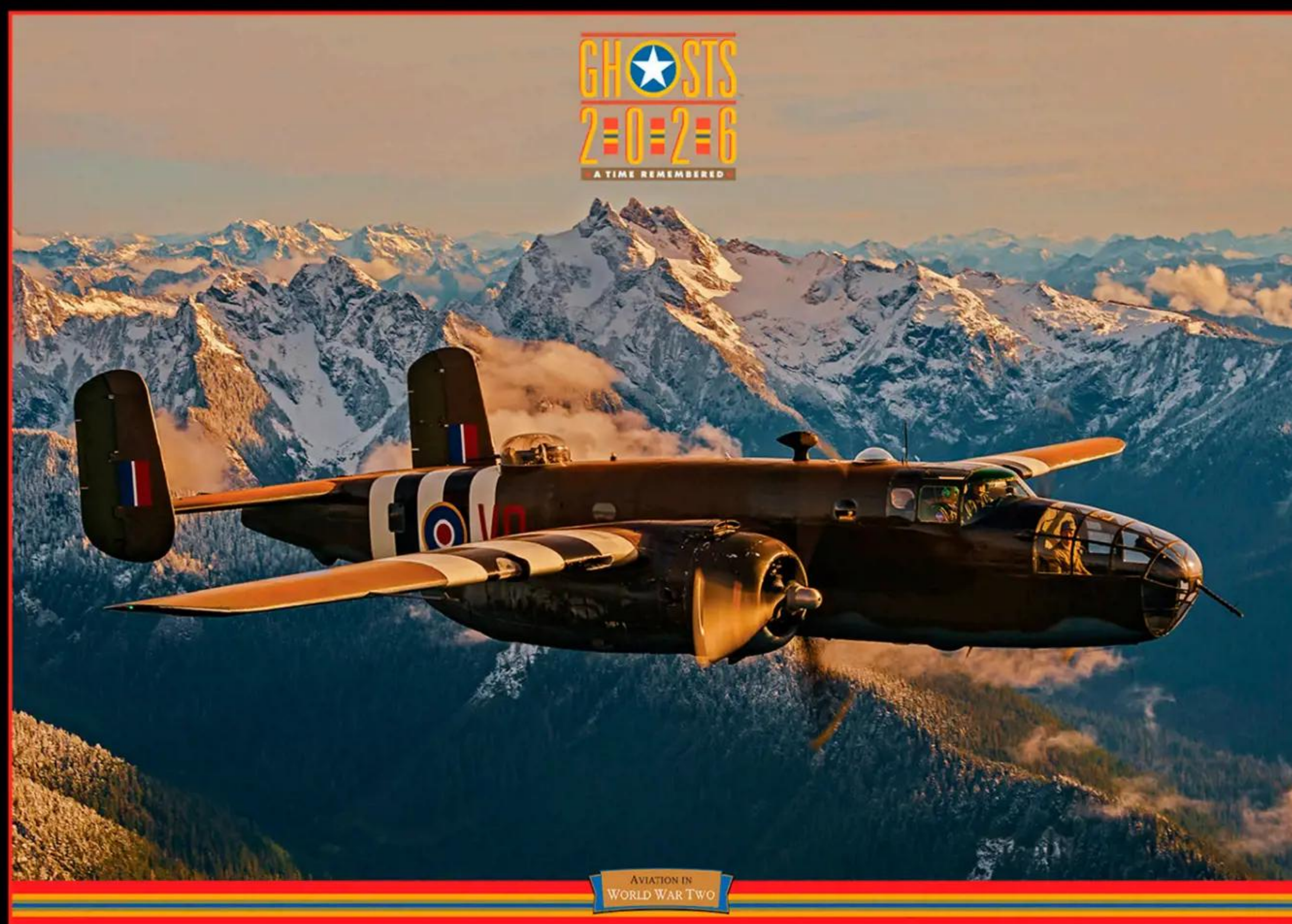


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